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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 12th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 20 October 2008, at 4.50 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Argüello (Chairman) ..... (Argentina)
later: Mr. Elsherbini (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Egypt)

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08-56445 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 4.50 p.m.

Agenda item 32: Questions relating to information (A/63/21 and 258)

1. **Mr. Hosseini** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking in his capacity as Rapporteur of the Committee on Information, introduced the report of that Committee (A/63/21), which provided information on the Committee's activities and recommendations in the form of draft resolutions. With the appointment of Antigua and Barbuda and Zambia, the Committee on Information would have a total of 112 members.

2. During the general debate at the 2008 session, members had emphasized the central role of the United Nations in global affairs and of the Department of Public Information as its public voice. They had also acknowledged the vital role of the Committee on Information and its cooperation with the Department. The need for parity among the official languages had been emphasized and the Department had been urged to strengthen United Nations information centres and ensure that any decision to rationalize was made in consultation with host countries, with due regard for geographical, linguistic and technological specificities. The importance of closer cooperation between the Department of Public Information, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support had been underlined and the Department of Public Information had been urged to highlight peacekeeping success stories from a national angle. Speakers had, moreover, referred to the importance of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, requesting the Department to play a more vigorous role in promoting the dialogue among civilizations. The Department's outreach programme had also been praised. In addition, the report referred to the plan for the *UN Chronicle* to evolve into a journal entitled *UN Affairs*. A pilot copy had recently been made available for consideration.

3. **Mr. Cruau** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, Liechtenstein, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, reiterated the importance of strategic reports that provided a clear assessment of results, set out difficulties encountered and proposed a range of solutions. The reports under consideration were testimony to efforts made in that regard.

4. At the 2008 session of the Committee on Information, the European Union had identified three priorities: the need to enhance the effectiveness of the Department within a limited budget; make additional efforts towards multilingualism; and simplify the resolution. Notable progress had been made on all three fronts, thanks to the flexibility shown by delegations. The European Union would spare no efforts in helping the Department to further improve its efficiency, especially with regard to the network of United Nations information centres. The Regional Information Centre in Brussels could serve as a model in that regard. Much remained to be done to practically implement multilingualism and ensure that the message of the United Nations was disseminated in at least all six official languages.

5. In times of crises, it was all the more necessary for the Organization to strengthen its political influence, develop partnerships with civil society, and participate more actively in the international exchange of ideas. The transformation of the *UN Chronicle* into a genuinely thought-provoking *UN Affairs* journal would be an important tool to that end.

6. Draft resolution A (A/63/21, chapter IV) of the Committee on Information *reaffirmed* the commitment of the international community to the principles of freedom of the press and of information, as well as to those of the independence, pluralism, diversity of the media and *urged* all States to ensure for journalists the free and effective performance of their professional tasks. Unfortunately, however, the death toll for journalists remained high and the international community had a collective responsibility to put a stop to the killings.

7. *Mr. Elsherbini (Egypt) Vice-Chairman took the Chair.*

8. **Mr. Blair** (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, underscored the importance of providing accurate, impartial, comprehensive and timely information on the work of the United Nations to Member States and the wider international community. The Department of Public Information, the public voice of the Organization, and any other entity providing information on the United Nations, must ensure that a consistent message was delivered.

9. The Group of 77 and China had taken note of the pilot copy of the new *UN Affairs* journal, but had fundamental concerns regarding multilingualism, content and editorial policy, as well as the diversity and extent of its potential audience. The Group held dearly the concept of parity of languages and believed that any new publication emanating from or within the United Nations should encompass all six official languages. If permitted to go forward, *UN Affairs* should be initiated, and continued, in all six languages. The Department of Public Information should also consider strengthening editorial policy and provide Member States with more opportunities to make comments and suggestions. Although greater appeal to academia was needed, the core readership of *UN Chronicle* should also be maintained. Additional efforts were needed to ensure that any new policy orientations concerning United Nations publications guaranteed an acceptable growth in their core readership. The Secretariat should, as a matter of priority, report back on new editorial policies that took account of such issues. Until a final decision was taken by Member States regarding *UN Affairs*, the Group of 77 and China requested that production of *UN Chronicle* should be resumed.

10. **Ms. Sinthusen** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) said that the gap in information access between developed and developing countries — as well as within developing countries — continued to widen, with the situation further exacerbated by uneven information quality and deliberate attempts to mislead the public. The role of the Department had become all the more important in that context. It should give priority to ensuring accuracy, credibility and availability of information on the work of the United Nations; engaging a diversity of stakeholders on issues of common concern; and dispelling misunderstandings and preconceived notions that polarized people. Information and communications technology (ICT) had the potential to create new opportunities for economic growth and social development in support of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It could also, however, widen disparities. Dissemination of information should not be seen as an end in itself, but as a means to help people reach more informed decisions. Disadvantaged and marginalized groups, for their part, should be made aware of issues of global concern, informed of their rights and empowered to improve their lives. That required the development and strengthening of information infrastructure, particularly in developing countries.

11. ASEAN commended the Department for its role in mobilizing global support for United Nations activities. Some barriers to successful programme implementation had been lifted, thanks in part to improved public awareness. There was a serious need, however, to foster understanding among peoples espousing different ideologies. Misuse of ICT, in the name of freedom of expression, could breed resentment and hostility, which undermined respect for the beliefs and rights of others. ASEAN looked forward to a greater role for the Department in efforts to promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue and welcomed its initiatives to promote international values and respect for diversity, including through the Alliance of Civilizations.

12. Radio remained the most accessible and affordable media for vast sectors of the population in many developing countries, particularly in remote areas or for people lacking access to formal education. Use of traditional media should therefore continue to be promoted. ASEAN welcomed the Department's optimal use of different types of client-oriented media and its efforts to ensure multilingualism. There was, however, a need to recruit local staff to ensure that publications and information programmes were tailored to local needs and cultures, to include translation into local languages where possible.

13. ASEAN was home to four United Nations information centres and noted the Department's collaboration with other information centres around the world and with United Nations organs. It wished to encourage improved networking with civil society and local and international media in order to reinforce outreach and channel voices from the field back to Headquarters. Efforts to rationalize the work of the information centres should also be encouraged, as should closer cooperation between information centres and consultation with host countries.

14. Speaking in her national capacity, she reaffirmed Thailand's commitment to supporting the work of the United Nations in the field of information. To raise awareness of the United Nations among young people, Thai students had been recruited to participate in meetings of the General Assembly and Youth Forum.

15. **Ms. Rodríguez** (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, welcomed the report of the Secretary-

General on the activities of the Department of Public Information in the first half of 2008 (A/63/258). It was particularly important to disseminate information on such topics as the maintenance of international peace and security; protection and promotion of human rights; achieving the MDGs; mitigating climate change; and prevention of HIV/AIDS. Closer cooperation between the Department and other United Nations entities, including the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Field Support and the Peacebuilding Support Office was needed in order to facilitate a broader and more accurate portrayal of the work of the Organization among the public, particularly with regard to peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities. She encouraged the Department to continue supporting the laudable work of United Nations information centres throughout the world and to continue disseminating information in as many languages as possible — including indigenous languages and Portuguese — using traditional mass media, such as radio, television and the press, since they remained the main sources of information in developing countries. The laudable efforts to provide access to the United Nations website to persons with disabilities should also be pursued.

16. Achieving parity among the six official and working United Nations languages was vital. In that connection, multilingualism should be promoted in order to put into practice the Organization's universal calling. Multilingualism was not to be assessed in terms of the number of documents translated, nor could it be addressed solely through increases in budget allocations. Rather, the goal should be to optimize the information structure within the Organization.

17. In the Secretary-General's report, the Secretariat had attempted to address the concerns raised by Member States. Information was provided on issues to which the Rio Group attached particular importance, such as cooperation between relevant departments to create policy and best practices for United Nations radio stations in peacekeeping operations and progress achieved in ending sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeeping personnel by means of public information materials and press briefings. Positive developments highlighted in the report included the provision of computers to 26 information centres in developing countries as well as efforts to publish a revised version of *The United Nations Today*, in Spanish.

18. While the Rio Group was pleased to note the inclusion of contributions from regional representatives, including Brazilian President Luiz Ignacio Lula Da Silva, in the pilot edition of *UN Affairs*, it had fundamental concerns as to the added value of such a publication and its ability to compete with academic publications. While new information and communications technologies made it possible to reach a broad range of audiences, many in developing countries did not yet have access to those technologies. Consequently, the Department must undertake efforts to raise awareness of the potential benefits of access to the Internet and ICT and of ways to bridge the digital divide.

19. **Mr. Ali** (Malaysia), speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, said that discriminatory and distorted coverage of events in developing countries continued unabated, putting the vast majority of mankind at a disadvantage and requiring urgent redress. The Non-Aligned Movement called for the responsible use of information as well as respect for existing codes of conduct and professional ethics. All forms of media were important, with ICT playing a supportive role. The growing digital divide between developed and developing countries was, however, a matter of serious concern. Universal, inclusive and non-discriminatory access to ICT should be strengthened in support of national efforts, in order to facilitate the genuine involvement of developing countries in the information society and knowledge economy. All States should ensure that the information society was founded on — and stimulated — respect for cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, as well as ethnical values.

20. ICT should be used to promote the MDGs, inter alia, by developing a global partnership for development. In order to fully harness ICT in developing countries, it was essential to eradicate the poverty, illiteracy and exclusion that prevented full participation. ASEAN wished to reaffirm its common desire and commitment to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society. Despite a long history of struggle, the objectives of the New World Information and Communication Order had yet to be realised. Continued imbalances in the information field had serious consequences for developing countries and should be combated through relevant agencies such as the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Internet governance, carried out according to the Geneva principles, constituted a core issue of the Information Society agenda and all Governments should have an equal role and responsibility for international Internet governance. The Secretary-General should initiate enhanced cooperation to that end, and as a matter of urgency.

21. Speaking in his national capacity, he called on Member States to redouble their efforts towards eliminating the digital divide, as well as imbalances in information dissemination. Malaysia remained committed to that endeavour, as evidenced by its continued support for the NAM News Network (NNN).

22. *Mr. Argüello (Argentina) resumed the Chair.*

23. **Mr. Berrah** (Algeria) said that his delegation had taken note of the Department's accomplishments, including improving its services and sending a credible message that reflected the various activities of the United Nations. Narrowing the information gap between developed and developing countries and establishing a more equitable global information system would enhance the efficiency of the Department; to that end, it should strengthen national capacities and modernize information facilities.

24. He commended the Department for devoting the pilot edition of *UN Affairs* to coverage of the global food crisis; however, the new publication had some shortcomings which could be overcome by simplifying its content in order to render it more accessible to all sectors of society, and ensuring that it was available in the six official languages of the United Nations. Furthermore, in keeping with the principle of multilingualism, the quality of Arabic-language media materials, websites, radio and television programmes produced by the United Nations should be improved. In that regard, establishing partnerships with translation institutes throughout the world, such as the Algiers-based Arab League Translation Institute, might be of added benefit.

25. The Department should expand the breadth and quality of its coverage of such priority areas as United Nations reform. Enhanced coordination with United Nations information centres worldwide would improve local communities' grasp of the Organization's activities, in addition to facilitating the exchange of views and experiences between Headquarters and information centres. Despite advances in communications technology, the Secretariat should accord due attention to the print media, since many throughout the world, particularly in the developing countries, still depended on the printed word for information about the United Nations.

26. Since 2008 marked both the sixtieth anniversary of the first United Nations peacekeeping operation and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Department should seize the opportunity to issue a statement that clearly emphasized the need to unify and redouble efforts to promote peace and enhance respect for human rights. He was concerned, however, at the absence of any reference in the Secretary-General's report to activities undertaken by the Department to raise awareness about the heroic struggle being waged by the defenceless and peace-loving Palestinian people, on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba. Nor was there any reference to the ongoing violations of their inalienable rights in contravention of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. His Government was eager to cooperate with the Department in disseminating a message that reflected the collective effort to implement the objectives of the Charter of the United Nations.

27. **Mr. Al Saedi** (United Arab Emirates) said that it was the international community's responsibility to provide the hundreds of thousands of people who had been marginalized as a result of the widening digital divide between developed and developing countries with the necessary resources to facilitate their access to modern technology. An international code of ethics should be developed that would help to establish appropriate legal and moral standards and ensure impartiality, transparency and credibility in the transfer and use of information and in ensuring respect for human rights and religious beliefs. He expressed regret over the persistence of inflammatory actions against certain religions and their value systems and emphasized the importance of protecting journalists, particularly in areas of armed conflict.

28. Human, financial and technical resources must be allocated in order to strengthen the role of the Department of Public Information in disseminating information on the goals and purposes of the United Nations. Special attention should be given to Arabic language services, in order to bring them up to the same standard as the services provided in the five other official languages. The Department and other United

Nations departments and institutions needed to address such current international issues as climate change, organized crime and terrorism, the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East in an impartial and transparent manner. In that connection, the Department should develop programmes that exposed the suffering of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation.

29. His Government had introduced legislation guaranteeing objective and balanced information and freedom of expression on various issues. It had also made provision for modern information and media facilities in its educational and development plans. Activities to promote responsible and free media included the establishment of the Abu Dhabi Free Zones and Dubai Media City, which hosted various satellite channels. The United Arab Emirates had also concluded bilateral agreements with some United Nations entities with a view to supporting the exchange of expertise and keeping pace with current international developments. He called for strengthened cooperation between the Department and other United Nations entities in order to promote a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations.

The meeting rose at 5.56 p.m.

United Nations A/C.4/63/SR.13

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 13th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 21 October 2008, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Argüello ..... (Argentina)
later: Mr. Cujba (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Republic of Moldova)

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08-56168 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda item 37: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*Territories not covered under other agenda items*) (*continued*)

Draft resolution on the Question of Western Sahara (A/C.4/63/L.7)

1. **The Chairman** read out minor corrections to the French version.

2. *Draft resolution A/C.4/63/L.7 was adopted.*

3. **Mr. Ripert** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Albania and, in addition, Ukraine, welcomed the consensus on the draft resolution. The European Union reaffirmed its support for the Secretary-General's efforts to achieve a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution which would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. It expressed its full support for the Manhasset negotiations initiated by Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) and for implementation of Security Council resolution 1813 (2008), which, inter alia, called upon the parties to show realism and a spirit of compromise and to engage in substantive negotiations. The European Union further welcomed the commitment of the parties to continue to show political will and work in an atmosphere propitious for dialogue, in order to enter into a more intensive phase of negotiations, in good faith and without preconditions. A return to the situation that existed prior to the adoption of Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) would be a major setback for hopes of resolving the conflict and would prolong an unacceptable situation for the population, especially in refugee camps. The construction of a united, stable and integrated Maghreb was largely dependent on finding a solution to the conflict in Western Sahara.

4. **Mr. Benmehidi** (Algeria) said that by adopting the draft resolution by consensus, the Committee had reaffirmed that the question of Western Sahara was one of decolonization and that the international community was committed to a successful conclusion of that process. The Committee had also reaffirmed its commitment to the exercise by the people of Western Sahara of their right to self-determination as part of a just, lasting and mutually acceptable solution pursuant to Security Council resolution 1754 (2007). The second and third preambular paragraphs and paragraph 3 of the draft resolution clarified the desired objective of the negotiations between the two parties, the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco, which Algeria could only welcome.

5. Algeria would spare no efforts in assisting the Saharawi and Moroccan peoples, its fraternal neighbours, in their search for a just, lasting and mutually acceptable solution that would serve to strengthen relations between all the peoples of the region.

6. **Mr. Sahel** (Morocco) also welcomed the consensus on the draft resolution. The text met legitimate expectations in that it incorporated the developments of the past year and reflected the international community's desire to support and encourage the new momentum to achieve a political solution that had arisen from Morocco's autonomy proposal. The negotiations that had resulted were thought by some to have the potential to resolve the regional dispute in question. Morocco welcomed the fact that the text incorporated developments relating to implementation of Security Council resolutions 1754 (2007), 1783 (2007) and 1813 (2008); that it called on the parties to enter into a more intensive phase of negotiations; and that it reflected a unified approach to the issue on the part of the General Assembly and Security Council. The spirit of compromise and realism shown by the parties during the drafting stage was also to be applauded. It was Morocco's sincere wish to see an end to the dispute, in the interests not only of the peoples of the Maghreb, but of all international partners.

7. *The meeting was suspended at 3.33 p.m. and resumed at 3.37 p.m.*

Agenda item 32: Questions relating to information (*continued*) (A/63/21 and A/63/258)

8. **Mr. Taleb** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation attached importance to the development of a new worldwide information system which was equitable and reflected the principles of the United Nations and international law. In a world beset by conflict, the Department of Public Information played an important role in spreading the Organization's message of peace and it was also instrumental in focusing attention on such issues as terrorism, climate change and food security. The Department should be

commended, in particular, for its work on the question of Palestine and it should continue to make every effort to raise international awareness of that question.

9. Having reviewed the Secretary-General's report (A/63/258), his delegation welcomed the efforts aimed at rationalizing the network of United Nations information centres, particularly in developed countries. However, he stressed that information centres in developing countries should be expanded in view of the role they played in capacity-building and in training journalists.

10. While welcoming the Department's efforts to improve the United Nations website, his delegation stressed that greater effort was required to achieve, without delay, parity among the official languages of the Organization. Specifically, the Arabic pages of the website needed to be improved and resources should therefore be allocated for that purpose.

11. His delegation was troubled by the lack of transparency in the evolution of the *UN Chronicle* into a journal entitled "UN Affairs". The Department had published a pilot issue of "UN Affairs" without first obtaining the approval of the General Assembly. His delegation intended to follow closely discussions concerning the new magazine in the Group of 77 and in the Arab Group and stressed that it should be published in all official languages, including Arabic.

12. The Department also needed to provide more extensive coverage of events in Africa and should focus, in particular, on programmes and activities aimed at implementing the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

13. **Mr. Ali** (Sudan) said that it was incumbent on the Department to ensure that the message of the United Nations reached the peoples of developing nations. To that end, it was necessary to close the digital divide between developed and developing States, while continuing to make use of traditional means of communication, such as radio, television and print.

14. Parity among the six official languages was also vital to effective communications between the Organization and the peoples of its Member States. While English and French would remain the working languages of the Secretariat, the Department was encouraged to use all official languages in its activities and to enter into partnerships in order to disseminate the message of the United Nations in other languages.

15. His delegation had reviewed carefully the pilot issue of the journal entitled "UN Affairs", which was to be the successor to *UN Chronicle*, and was of the view that the Department should take the best elements from both and combine them into a new publication. He also looked forward to greater coverage of the positive developments that had occurred since the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement.

16. The report of the Secretary-General had always included a section on the Department's activities in relation to the question of Palestine, an issue of great importance to the United Nations. Noting that the current report lacked any information in that regard, he called on the Department to ensure that such information was included in future reports.

17. **Mr. Al Hadhrami** (Yemen) said that his delegation attached great importance to the Department's special information programme on the question of Palestine and was disappointed that there had been no mention of that programme in the report of the Secretary-General. While welcoming the appointment of a new director for the United Nations information centre in Sana'a, he noted that that director had yet to assume his post. He therefore urged the Department to appoint a replacement in view of the important role the centre played in disseminating information about the Organization to the people of Yemen, which was one of the least developed countries in the Arabian Peninsula.

18. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that her Government had observed first-hand the use being made by the United Nations of new communications technologies. Direct Internet transmission of the annual DPI/NGO Conference, for example, had made it possible for a recently released hostage to tell the world in dramatic terms how the terrorist Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) were violating the human rights of Colombian citizens and how the Government was striving to guarantee them.

19. The Secretary-General's report pointed to a marked increase in the use of the United Nations website, particularly the video materials posted on the Internet. The expanded audience and its interactive capacity demanded more professional responsibility in the gathering and transmitting of data.

20. The Department of Public Information was doing important work in publicizing the principles, activities and objectives of the Organization. It was effectively supported in those tasks by the United Nations

information centres, and they should be strengthened. The training organized by the Department for the staff of the regional information centres would allow them to train and inform others in their own region. Her delegation hoped that the information centre in Colombia would be able to take advantage of such training. Noting that the Committee on Information was giving thought to reorganizing the information centres, she said that it should bear in mind the individual characteristics of each centre and consult with the host countries. Multilingualism had to be an essential feature of the United Nations communications strategies.

21. The Department's efforts to foster dialogue with delegations and keep them informed about its activities were useful and should be broadened. Her delegation welcomed the electronic access to documents in more than 80 languages provided by the Department through the website of United Nations information centres.

22. The pilot edition of *UN Affairs* seemed to be a promising initiative, but it was a pity to have to choose between *UN Affairs* and *UN Chronicle*, for both had their own advantages and audiences. The contents of *UN Chronicle* could be modified to accommodate new approaches, or a chapter could be included covering issues of greater interest to the academic community.

23. **Mr. Saripudin** (Indonesia) observed that in an increasingly complicated world, disseminating to the whole world as much information about the Organization as the Department of Public Information did was a challenging assignment. The network of United Nations information centres, services and components was becoming increasingly integrated with the United Nations country teams. The use of the United Nations website was expanding remarkably and it was fast becoming an essential resource for news and information.

24. The Department was dealing with important international issues in such areas as peacekeeping, the Millennium Development Goals, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, climate change and human rights. Its worldwide network was now better structured and efficient as well as better equipped. Progress had been furthered tremendously by a highly professional communications strategy that focused on clear target audiences and appropriate new technologies. The Department would be indispensable in maintaining the momentum created by the recent United Nations Climate Change Conference by keeping the issue on the front page and in the headlines.

25. As a troop-contributing country, Indonesia knew from experience how valuable dissemination of information was to United Nations peacekeeping, and it welcomed the close cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

26. Informed mass media played a critical role in promoting understanding, respect and tolerance among faiths, cultures and civilizations, for they could spread a positive and unifying message, or a divisive one. The Department of Public Information could do vital work in sensitizing the mass media throughout the world to the need to combat the practice of stereotyping. Freedom of expression brought with it the responsibility to serve the highest interest of all and not to cause offence. The Department must also use its worldwide presence to foster dialogue among civilizations and a culture of peace.

27. **Mr. Khan** (Bangladesh), noting that his delegation supported the Department's efforts to continually publicize issues of importance to the international community, said that, as one of the largest troop-contributing countries to United Nations peacekeeping operations, Bangladesh welcomed the cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and would like to see the role of the peacekeepers and the troop-contributing countries better highlighted in the Department of Public Information's multimedia activities. Military personnel and civilian police from Bangladesh were currently involved in some of the toughest peacekeeping challenges around the world and a number had died in the process. When peacekeepers were honoured, locally and internationally, the ideals of peace and justice were honoured.

28. Noting that 2009 would mark the thirty-fifth anniversary of his country's entry into the United Nations he asked the Department to consider producing a video and a radio programme highlighting Bangladesh's contribution to peacekeeping and other humanitarian activities to mark that occasion. Similar programmes should be produced to honour similar landmark events of other Member States, in order to give their people a greater sense of ownership of the United Nations and its work.

29. The staff of the United Nations Information Centre in Dhaka often brought educational materials to neglected schools in remote areas with limited exposure

to international information, and his delegation hoped that the Department would provide the Centre with training and upgrade its technology.

30. The Department should also focus on efforts by Member States to promote democracy and protect democratic gains; it could, for instance, mark the forthcoming national elections in his country that would transfer power to elected representatives by producing a television programme recording that celebration of democratic values.

31. He also urged the Department to publicize such issues as climate change and the worldwide food crisis — both of which threatened his country — and to bridge the information gap by tying together skills and knowledge from across the globe, thus promoting a platform for fighting the challenges collectively.

32. *Mr. Cujba (Republic of Moldova), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

33. **Mr. Habib** (Lebanon) praised the Department of Public Information, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Field Support and the Peacebuilding Support Office for their close cooperation on the media campaign that had been undertaken to support the commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the commencement of peacekeeping operations. As host to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), his country was highly aware of the important role that the media played in conveying an accurate picture of the Organization's work.

34. The Secretariat was to be commended for expanding its use of modern communications tools and for enhancing the United Nations website. He urged the Secretariat to continue its efforts to achieve parity among the Organization's six official languages, including Arabic, and to ensure that the United Nations website was easily accessible in all languages.

35. Welcoming the annual training given by the special information programme on Palestine to journalists from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, he called on the Department to redouble its efforts in support of the Palestinian people's struggle for self-determination and to establish an independent State. It was also incumbent on the Department to support States in their rightful efforts to recover occupied territories.

36. The United Nations was to be commended for strengthening the technical infrastructure of its information centres throughout the developing world, in particular in the Arab countries. In that connection, training courses and workshops should be increased in order to endow those centres with human resources that complemented their modernized infrastructures. On the question of the rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres, he said it was imperative to consult the countries in which existing information centres were located prior to taking any action.

37. In respect of the proposal to replace *UN Chronicle* with a journal entitled "UN Affairs", he said that, whatever its title, the primary goal of the publication would remain unchanged, namely, to convey clearly and objectively information about matters with which the Organization was concerned. The magazine should be published in all six official languages.

38. **Mr. Mori** (Japan) welcomed the priority given by the Department of Public Information to peace and security, development and human rights and its efforts to rationalize its operations. Earlier in the year, Japan had hosted various important international events: at the G-8 Summit Meeting, the Department had arranged a number of high-level meetings, public lectures and press conferences that promoted a positive image of the United Nations in Japan and provided an opportunity to mobilize the entire United Nations system around a strategy for short- and medium-term food security while renewing the commitment to the Millennium Development Goals.

39. The United Nations information centres did valuable work in informing the public in 80 local languages around the world. The Department had done much to improve the working of the centres, as described in the Secretary-General's report. Earlier that year, Japan had worked with the Department in organizing a strategic communications workshop for Asia and the Pacific, which had been attended by Department officials and information centre directors from the region and which had advanced the cause of capacity-building and networking.

40. The Japanese Foreign Ministry and the Department had organized a joint seminar on 60 years of United Nations peacekeeping, bringing together members of academia, opinion leaders and government officials to discuss the current challenges to peace and security. Having just been elected as a non-permanent Member of the Security Council, Japan looked forward to playing a constructive role in promoting and maintaining international peace and security.

41. **Mr. Davide** (Philippines) paid tribute to the Department's efforts to promote the priority issues of the United Nations: peace and security, development and human rights. The Department had broadened its reach, inter alia, by strengthening linkages with Member States, the United Nations system as a whole and civil society, and by making effective use of traditional as well as non-traditional media.

42. He hoped that sustained efforts would be made to bridge the digital divide and that the Department would make full use of new technology to improve public access to information about the United Nations, including its response to climate change and the energy, food and financial crises. It was to be hoped that the Department would also help the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to promote inter-religious dialogue and cooperation as part of ongoing efforts to foster the culture of dialogue among civilizations.

43. The Department also played an important role in shaping public perception of United Nations peacekeeping operations, heralding the accomplishments of the Blue Helmets and positively projecting the participation of troop-contributing countries, such as the Philippines. The Department had also helped address the sexual exploitation and abuse scandal, resulting in a significant decline in allegations and sensational media reports.

44. The Media Accreditation and Liaison Unit, for its part, should be commended for overseeing press coverage of the opening of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. Efforts should be made to develop a system that would guarantee access for all members of the media.

45. **Mr. Al-Shatti** (Kuwait) after commending the Department's efforts to keep up with developments in communications technology, said that it was imperative to ensure that the media were used to promote dialogue among all peoples rather than as a tool for imposing a particular culture or ideology. There should be parity among the official languages, including Arabic, in the Department's activities.

46. The Department should redouble its assistance to developing countries in order to help close the digital divide and should continue its efforts to ensure that journalists were able to carry out their professional duties freely and effectively. All acts of aggression against journalists should be strongly condemned. The Department should also continue its efforts aimed at focusing attention on and raising international awareness of the question of Palestine.

47. Kuwait stood ready to cooperate with all international efforts to increase freedom of the media, as long as those efforts did not conflict with Arab and Islamic traditions and values.

48. **Ms. Ho** Moon Shin (Singapore) said that new information and communications technology (ICT) had created vast opportunities for economic growth and social development; it also had a role to play in poverty eradication. In an age when information was so readily available and empowering, it was all the more necessary to bridge the digital gap. The Department of Public Information had been reaching out to millions of people through both new and traditional means of communication. It had been active in tailoring messages for different target audiences and had engaged film-makers to bring the work of the United Nations to a wider public. The comic book featuring well-known superheroes such as Spiderman should be distributed to young audiences the world over, not only to schools in the United States.

49. In order to maintain its credibility the department must ensure that the information it provided was accurate and balanced. Indeed, the Organization as a whole must have the courage to admit errors and take appropriate action where necessary and it must defend itself robustly against false allegations.

50. Everyone had the right to freedom of opinion and expression, as well as the freedom to seek and receive accurate information, including with respect to actions being undertaken in their interests by their Governments and the United Nations. That freedom must, however, be exercised responsibly. The truth must be sought and spoken with due respect and care, without overstepping limits.

51. **Mr. Kang** Myong Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that while information activities could play an important role in promoting world peace and sustainable development, certain countries continued to misuse information technologies. Taking advantage of their monopoly on information media, they sought to impose their own values and lifestyles by disseminating distorted information and even instigating the overthrow of systems. One example of such activity was "Radio Free Asia", which the United States was using to target Asian countries, including his own, in clear violation of the principles and purposes of the Charter.

52. The first and foremost task was to establish a new and just international information order. The international community should take substantive measures to ensure that such an order was established. Particular attention should be paid to helping developing countries enhance their information and communication capabilities, in order to enable them to participate equally in international information activities and to ensure fairness and accuracy. Most developing countries were currently marginalized from the rapid development of information technologies despite their strenuous efforts at capacity-building. Developed countries and international organizations should enhance cooperation in such areas as the transfer of advanced technologies to and financial investment in the information and communication infrastructures of developing countries.

53. His delegation also looked forward to greater efforts by the Department to improve information capacity and train broadcasters and journalists from developing countries.

54. **Mr. Malmierca Díaz** (Cuba) said that the rapid development of communications and information technology had not addressed the growing "digital divide" between rich and poor countries. The flow of information was marked by distortions; news was spread or silenced depending on whether or not it suited the needs of the powerful, and freedom of expression and of information suffered accordingly. Clearly a new world information and communications order was needed.

55. The developing world should be given special treatment in the United Nations information system and United Nations information centres throughout the world should play a more active role in disseminating balanced information, taking into account the needs of the audience at whom the message was aimed. Broadcast media such as radio should continue to be promoted as a means of informing the vast illiterate populations of the South. In that regard, Cuba had implemented a literacy programme of its own in 15 countries, using audiovisual aids and new information technologies to enhance the effectiveness of teaching materials.

56. Once again, his delegation wished to denounce the radio and television aggression that the United States Government continued to aim at his country. Those broadcasts contravened international law as well as the rules and procedures of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). His Government had denounced them in every appropriate forum. Each week, United States-based stations broadcast to Cuba more than 1,920 hours of radio and television through 32 different frequencies. In a new escalation of that aggression, the United States Government had begun using military aircraft to beam signals into Cuba. Of the 27 stations broadcasting subversive programmes against Cuba, 22 aimed their signals directly towards the country; three of them were the property of the United States Government. Some of the stations could be linked to terrorists who lived in United States territory. In condemning those acts of aggression, his delegation reiterated that the choice of the kind of information that the Cuban people wished to receive was a sovereign decision of his country and not of the United States Government.

57. **Mr. Tiendrebeogo** (Burkina Faso) said that the public should be made better aware not only of the purposes and principles of the United Nations, but also of the revitalization process currently under way. The Department of Public Information should play a more central, catalytic role in strengthening system-wide coherence in the context of the reforms.

58. Through its network of information centres, the Department provided a vital source of information for Member States and for the United Nations system as a whole. The Information Centres were crucial to the Department's awareness-raising, training and information-gathering activities, particularly in developing countries and any rationalization must occur on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with host countries. The regional information centre in Ouagadougou played a vital role in raising the visibility of United Nations operational activities for development and provided logistical support for Governments, academia and the media. Although the strengthening of certain information centres must be welcomed, adequate resources should be made available across the board.

59. **Mr. Chávez** (Peru) said that his country upheld the value of freedom of expression and of the press in democratic societies, even in societies in conflict or emerging from conflict.

60. The regional United Nations information centres should adopt an approach that followed Headquarters guidelines but also took into account consultations with the individual information centres in their regions, each of which could contribute its own expertise on United

Nations issues. Information centres in neighbouring countries, which often faced similar problems, could most usefully deal directly between themselves. Equipping some information centres with more staff and assigning them coordinating functions would allow the network of information centres to present a clear and consistent message on the part of the United Nations. Culture and history, geographical proximity and the level of technological development, which varied from country to country and region to region, were the most relevant criteria in that connection.

61. In Latin America, the United Nations information centres worked flexibly and cooperatively with each other on various United Nations campaigns such as ending violence against women. Such networking would be facilitated by greater use of the Internet. His Government supported the work of the United Nations Information Centre in Lima, whose work with Peruvian troops about to serve in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) had been very valuable. In Peru itself, the Friends of the United Nations Club programme had allowed young people of high-school age to spread the United Nations message.

62. The Department of Public Information should highlight the specific benefits the United Nations brought to the inhabitants of the various countries, in such areas as humanitarian assistance in disasters, peacekeeping, sustainable development, climate change and public health systems.

63. In addition, it was important that there should be parity among all six of the official languages. Peru welcomed the closer ties between the Department and the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General. In future it would be interesting to have more details about expanded coverage of the activities of the main United Nations bodies and the Peacebuilding Commission, and their interaction with the countries concerned.

64. The Department had effectively transmitted the meetings of the main bodies and conferences in the original languages through Internet videos. Missions and United Nations information centres could profit from greater access to the United Nations Intranet. The Department's activities publicizing the work of the United Nations among academics, analysts, opinion leaders and civil society had been commendable. In launching the publication *UN Affairs*, the Department should ensure parity of official languages and issue it without drawing budgetary resources away from other activities.

65. **Mr. Kanaan** (Observer for Palestine) said that the failure to include, in the report of the Secretary-General, any details of the Department's activities relating to the question of Palestine was a deeply disturbing and highly regrettable omission. The special information programme on the subject, for instance, was very useful in raising awareness of the international community concerning the question of Palestine, as stated in General Assembly resolution 62/82, which had been adopted by an overwhelming majority. He profoundly appreciated the support demonstrated for that programme, which also effectively contributed to an atmosphere conducive to dialogue and supportive of the peace process. The Palestine and Decolonization Section of the Department additionally played a vital role through its organization of seminars on the search for Israeli-Palestinian peace and its development of digital film archives documenting the history of the Palestinian question for the benefit of researchers and educational institutions, an activity to which he hoped special attention would be devoted. He commended the Department's efforts for inclusion of the permanent exhibition on Palestine in the guided tours for visitors to the United Nations and hoped that the revised edition of the booklet entitled *The Question of Palestine and the United Nations* would soon be available in all six official languages.

66. He attached great importance to the Department's continuing assistance to the Palestinian people in the field of media development, in particular its training programmes for Palestinian broadcasters and journalists; their participation in such programmes was crucial, notwithstanding the obstacles placed in their way by the occupying Power. In addition to such illegal and inhumane practices as the ongoing construction of the separation wall and the imposition of collective punishment on the Palestinian people, Israeli occupying forces constantly targeted journalists who attempted to portray the truth and some had been killed in the process. The perpetrators had, moreover, been cleared of any wrongdoing, which served as testimony to Israel's persistence in covering up its war crimes against Palestinian civilians, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In that same context, he cited details of the brutal harassment of prize-winning Palestinian journalist Mohammed Omer, whose case was fully documented in

section III A of the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 (A/63/326).

67. Such grave violations of human rights were further compounded by the acts of violence and intimidation perpetrated against Palestinian civilians by Israeli settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Indeed, in the latest incident only two days earlier, settlers had attacked and injured not only Palestinian farmers and journalists, but also foreign peace activists. He consequently emphasized the need for Israel to comply with General Assembly resolution 62/82, in particular paragraph 3 (d) concerning the organization and promotion of fact-finding news missions for journalists to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, in the interests of factual reporting on the ground.

68. Given the Israeli control of Palestine's frequency spectrum and the denial of direct access to communication and information services, the Palestinian people were also perpetually impeded in their ability to keep pace with technological advances. Progress along the road to knowledge and development could not be achieved without an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Syrian Golan and the Shab'a farmlands in Lebanon. Only with the resulting establishment of a lasting, just and comprehensive peace would the peoples of the region be able to exercise their legitimate rights, including the right to harness information and technology with a view to, inter alia, sustainable development, job creation and poverty eradication.

Rights of reply

69. **Mr. Traystman** (United States of America), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his Government had steadfastly observed its international obligations, particularly those of the ITU concerning avoidance of harmful interference with the services of other countries. For 49 years, the people of Cuba had been denied the right to choose their own representatives, to voice their opinions without fear of reprisal, and to meet or organize freely.

70. The Cuban Government's opposition to Radio and TV Martí was driven by fear of the consequences if the Cuban people were to receive uncensored information about their own country and the world around them. Life for the Cuban people could not improve under their current repressive system of government.

71. **Ms. Hernández Toledano** (Cuba), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that contrary to what the representative of the United States wanted those present to believe, the radio and television aggression of that country against Cuba served only to demonstrate that Government's total disregard for the norms governing international relations. Only the Cuban people had the right to decide how and about what they should be informed.

72. The Government of the country that claimed to defend the principles of democracy and human rights lacked moral authority and credibility to speak about human rights in any country. It was not Cuba but the Government of the United States that was responsible for unilateral wars that violated international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and it was the United States that defended the crimes committed daily against the Palestinian people, that flouted human rights during the conflict in Lebanon, and that tortured prisoners in Guantánamo Naval Base and in Abu Ghraib. Cuba would continue to denounce, in all appropriate forums, all policies of blockade and aggression against it by the United States.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

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Summary record of the 14th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 22 October 2008, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Argüello ..... (Argentina)
later: Mr. Elsherbini (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Egypt)

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08-56403 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 32: Questions relating to information (*continued*) (A/63/21 and A/63/258)

1. **Mr. Akasaka** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information), introducing the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/258), said that the work of the Department of Public Information was guided by five objectives. These were: adoption of a strategic approach that emphasized priorities and early preparation, improved coordination, promotion of support for the United Nations by creating new partnerships — including with the television and film industries, non-governmental organizations, the business community and young people — and expanding old ones, promotion of multilingualism and, lastly, incorporation of internal evaluation as a tool for assessing the impact of its work.

2. As part of its efforts to disseminate information about the United Nations and its objectives, the Department, in close cooperation with its United Nations system partners, had executed major media campaigns for the high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals and the high-level meeting on Africa's development needs. The campaigns had been launched during the opening of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly and had yielded largely positive coverage, including hundreds of articles in 57 countries.

3. Conscious of the need to expand its partnerships with civil society and non-governmental organizations, the Department had, for the first time, held its yearly conference for non-governmental organizations away from Headquarters, in Paris. Funded by the Government of France with support from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the conference had been attended by more than 1,100 participants representing 461 non-governmental organizations from 65 countries.

4. Another step aimed at broadening the Department's outreach was the planned launch of a new journal entitled "*UN Affairs*", which was to be the successor to the quarterly *UN Chronicle*. The commitment to provide assistance to the Palestinian people was reflected in the Department's training programme for Palestinian journalists and the annual international media seminar on peace in the Middle East.

5. United Nations information centres were playing an increasingly important role in the Department's outreach activities and were producing information materials in 130 languages and maintaining websites in 30 local languages. In that connection, the Department would soon launch a new website, in all six official languages, that would serve as a portal to the websites of individual information centres.

6. Turning to the need for internal evaluation of Department activities and services, he said that he intended to hold every project manager accountable for his own area of responsibility and that the Department would increasingly rely on user feedback in order to derive lessons and action points for application by managers. For example, after analysing how its partner radio stations in China had been using its programmes, the Department's Chinese Unit had decided to form two shifts in order to provide clients with more frequently updated news.

7. Although the Department had many new projects planned, implementation would be contingent on the availability of resources. The budget for the information centres, in particular, was being stretched to the breaking point. The centres had suffered directly from rising fuel and utility costs, currency fluctuations and the ever-increasing need for enhanced security. As a result, their ability to engage fully the audiences they were meant to serve had been severely constrained, particularly as regards production of materials in local languages. Looking ahead to the 2010-2011 biennium, the Department might be forced to reduce its operations in the field. In that connection, he expressed his gratitude to the countries that had supported the information centres through the provision of premises and voluntary contributions.

8. Budget constraints would also adversely affect the webcasting of sessions of the Human Rights Council in Geneva for, in 2007, the General Assembly had rejected a proposal for additional funding. Accordingly, it would not be possible to continue webcasting Council meetings in Geneva without negatively impacting the webcasting of other activities at Headquarters.

9. The Capital Master Plan would have a severe impact on the ongoing efforts to preserve audio-visual archives of the United Nations. While the process of

digitizing the photographic collections should be completed within the next few months, preserving the film and video collections would be more difficult. The Department intended to move the analogue collection during the renovation work, but the Plan did not provide for air-conditioned facilities in which to archive the collection. Solving the problem would require funding and he therefore called upon Committee members to lend their support in that regard.

10. **The Chairman** said that the Committee would hold an interactive dialogue on the item, and invited members to put questions to the Under-Secretary-General.

11. **Mr. Blair** (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, expressed concern about the proposal to transform the *UN Chronicle* into a journal entitled "*UN Affairs*" and asked whether the *UN Chronicle* would be continued and whether the new journal's editorial policy and core audience would remain the same.

12. **Mr. Badji** (Senegal) asked what was being done to ensure parity among official languages and to address discrimination against non-English speaking delegations with respect to document availability. Noting that the United Nations information centre in Senegal, like other information centres, feared for its future, he wondered what impact the proposed rationalization would have on the information centre network.

13. **Mr. Cruan** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union, asked whether the "red spot" system used on security passes to identify media representatives during ministerial week would be continued.

14. He also requested confirmation that the phasing of the *UN Chronicle* into the new *UN Affairs* journal would, indeed, have no programme budget implications and for clarification as to the intended target audience for the new booklet entitled *Building a Stronger UN for a Better World: The Secretary-General's Vision* and whether it was to be made available in all official languages. The Under-Secretary-General might also indicate how Member States could best provide support for events such as the *UN Book Days*, which had been held two weeks earlier.

15. Speaking in his national capacity, he echoed the concerns raised by the previous speaker.

16. **Mr. Akasaka** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information), responding first to the representative of Antigua and Barbuda, said that if Member States so wished, publication of *UN Chronicle* would resume until a decision was reached with respect to "*UN Affairs*". Editorial policy would continue to ensure fair geographical representation, gender balance and ongoing quality improvement. It was to be hoped that heads of States would be among the contributors, as had been planned for *UN Affairs*. The *UN Chronicle* would be made widely available, in both print and online editions, and its academic outreach potential would be explored.

17. After assuring the representative of Senegal that the Department would be working to strengthen the capacities of the United Nations Information Centre in Dakar, he said that it attached great importance to parity among the Organization's official languages, including with respect to documentation, staff recruitment, and the Department's own information products. As Coordinator for Multilingualism, he would be reporting to the General Assembly, in early 2009, on specific measures being undertaken throughout the Secretariat to address the issue.

18. In response to the representative of France, he said that the Department would continue to issue representatives of the media with "red spots" on their identification badges during ministerial week and that consultations would be held with the Department of Safety and Security to clarify remaining issues.

19. In light of the current budgetary situation, it was not his intention to request additional resources for *UN Affairs*. The booklet outlining the Secretary-General's vision would be distributed as widely as possible, including to permanent missions and the general public.

20. **Mr. Taleb** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, despite repeated requests from his delegation, the Department had yet to take the technical measures required to accommodate the unique characteristics of the Arabic language. The Arabic versions of several United Nations websites for which the Department was responsible were poorly designed compared with those in other languages. In addition, they contained numerous linguistic and orthographic errors.

21. Finally, he wished to know why the annual international media seminar on peace in the Middle East had been delayed.

22. **Mr. Kanaan** (Observer for Palestine) asked why the report of the Secretary-General had failed to mention efforts undertaken in implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/82 on the Department's special information programme on the question of Palestine.

23. **Mr. Wada** (Japan) expressed support for the Department's efforts to strengthen multilingualism and enquired about the financial implications of the transition from *UN Chronicle* to "*UN Affairs*".

24. **Mr. Akasaka** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information), responding first to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, said that the international media seminar had been delayed because replies had not been immediately forthcoming from the Member States which had been approached to host the seminar. The Government of Austria had proposed to host the seminar in Vienna in early December.

25. Turning to the issue raised by the observer for Palestine, he said that the report of the Secretary-General was not meant to provide a comprehensive overview of the Department's work; rather, it focused on activities undertaken since the thirtieth session of the Committee on Information. The Department's training programme for Palestinian broadcasters and journalists was already under way and would be included in the following year's report, as would an update on the rest of the Department's activities relating to Palestine.

26. The Department would be seeking to address ongoing concerns about the quality of the translation into Arabic of some of its products, including the website. It would welcome further advice in that regard from interested delegations.

27. **Mr. Taleb** (Syrian Arab Republic), said that he could still not understand why an entire section on Palestine had disappeared from the Secretary-General's report. At the very least, mention should have been made of *The question of Palestine and the United Nations*, one of the Department's recent publications.

28. **Mr. Suárez Salvia** (Argentina) said that the issue of multilingualism concerned the entire Organization, not just the Department. The latter was making laudable efforts to make information available to the public not only in the official languages, but in up to 130 other languages.

29. **Mr. Akasaka** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information), said that the Department was doing its best to ensure parity among all official languages as well as to increase use of other languages such as Portuguese and Kiswahili. Resources were the major obstacle. The new United Nations information centres website http://unic.un.org contained links to the websites of 63 information centres in 33 different languages and provided unique access to content in 130 local languages.

30. Turning to the remarks made by the representative of Japan concerning the proposed transition of *UN Chronicle* into *UN Affairs*, he said that he hoped that a consensus decision would soon be reached though consultations with Member States.

31. With regard to the remarks made by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, he said that every effort would be made not to repeat past errors. It could not be concluded that the Department did not accord due importance to its activities regarding Palestine. It would do its best to ensure that those activities were adequately reflected in future reports.

32. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to continue with its general debate on the item.

33. **Ms. Hamilton Brown** (Jamaica), speaking on behalf of the 14 member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), noting that the United Nations website had been made more accessible to persons with disabilities, said that CARICOM looked forward to all web pages becoming fully compliant with accessibility guidelines. The annual Journalists' Fellowship Programme, which in 2008 had included among its participants a journalist from the Caribbean Territory of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was important in training and encouraging journalists from the developing world.

34. The United Nations website was the most reliable source of up-to-date information on United Nations activities. Nevertheless, in developing regions, traditional means of communication, in particular radio and the print media, remained the most widely used sources. Thus, it was commendable that the Department was relying more on partnerships with international broadcasters to make United Nations

radio programmes more widely available in the six official languages and two non-official languages.

35. While information and communications technologies had great potential for helping developing countries to meet their socio-economic goals in all sectors, in order for that potential to be realized it was necessary to mobilize additional resources. CARICOM itself was drafting a strategy and action plan on the use of information and communications technology for development.

36. More should be done to ensure that all United Nations publications and press releases were published in the six official languages on an equal footing. The plan to have the *UN Chronicle* evolve into *UN Affairs* would in fact do away with any multilingual publication. The process of selecting contributors to *UN Affairs*, the absence of a governing editorial policy and the need for circulation to the widest possible audience were also matters of concern.

37. Two monumental anniversaries were approaching: the sixtieth anniversary of both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of United Nations peacekeeping operations. The activities undertaken by the Department and its information centres would prove critical in informing the global public about them and about the Organization's role in securing human rights for all peoples and fostering world peace and security. The anniversaries were also an opportunity to reinforce the international community's commitment to those goals.

38. Unfortunately, the Organization's peacekeeping record continued to be tarnished by the actions of a small minority who committed acts of sexual abuse and exploitation while on peacekeeping missions. In communicating the Organization's zero tolerance policy and reinforcing the image of the United Nations as a bastion for justice, equality and the protection of universal human rights, the Department had helped lessen such occurrences and was to be commended.

39. The CARICOM member States also congratulated the Department for successfully staging the first annual commemorative event to mark the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade earlier in the year.

40. **Ms. Etomzini** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that her delegation was concerned that the report did not contain any information on the question of Palestine, particularly in view of the war crimes being perpetrated against the Palestinians of the Gaza Strip.

41. Although information programmes were primarily a national responsibility, the United Nations nonetheless had an important role to play in devising an appropriate mechanism that would help to bridge the digital divide between developed and developing States. Lastly, she stressed the importance of parity among the six official languages of the Organization, although her delegation understood that the Department was faced with certain constraints in that regard.

42. **Mr. Myint** (Myanmar) observed that the United Nations could play a vital role in addressing a host of major issues of the day but its success would depend on the level of support it received from the international community. The Department of Public Information, had found innovative and creative ways of strengthening that support through outreach activities and accurate, impartial and timely information about the work of the United Nations. Increased integration of the United Nations information centres with the United Nations country teams, and further expansion of the Department's media services had been useful in mobilizing that support. As the Department's focal points, nationally and regionally, the centres should be given the resources they needed.

43. The developing countries were concerned about continuing imbalances in the field of information and communication. Most often, the reporting of events in the developing countries was biased or distorted. The growing digital divide was largely at fault, and the Department of Public Information could do much to bridge it. In addition, the international media occasionally created misconceptions about the United Nations; unless those misconceptions could be dispelled in a timely fashion, the Organization's image would be tarnished. The Department should respond promptly and objectively using both traditional and non-traditional means to reach as vast an audience as possible.

44. Finally, his delegation commended the Department for its three-tier pricing policy for United Nations publications that had made them more affordable in developed countries. Since those on sale at Headquarters were relatively expensive, the Department should consider outsourcing their production. The proposed publication of "*UN Affairs*"

would be followed with keen interest by many delegations.

45. **The Chairman**, speaking as the representative of Egypt, said that, in view of the rapid pace of technological change and the North-South digital divide, it was imperative to develop a new and more just worldwide information system based on equality and mutual respect between civilizations. That placed a particular burden on the United Nations to shoulder its responsibility to strengthen international cooperation in respect of information.

46. It was incumbent on the Department to enhance its coverage of priority issues on the agenda of the United Nations. To that end, it should endeavour to strengthen the role of the United Nations information centres in Cairo, Mexico City and Pretoria, extend the Organization's information network throughout the world, particularly in developing and least developed countries, while respecting regional characteristics and also continue its programmes in support of economic and social development as well as its special information programme on Palestine.

47. In that connection, his delegation was disappointed to see that the report contained no information on the question of Palestine and looked forward to receiving an explanation for that omission. He hoped that it had not been caused by political considerations. While the Department was to be commended for producing a pilot edition of "*UN Affairs*", the new magazine was focused on a narrow audience and had not been released in all official languages. He reiterated the importance of achieving parity among the six official languages on the United Nations website.

48. **Mr. Anwar** (India) said that the Department of Public Information was the crucial conduit for the flow of information between the United Nations, Member States, the media, civil society and the public at large; its success would be measured by its ability to meet its goals within limited resources.

49. In the developing countries, traditional means of communication, including radio and print, were still very relevant for spreading the United Nations message, and his delegation therefore urged the Department to use a combination of traditional means and modern technologies. Also, more local content and involvement in the production of programmes would make the latter more relevant.

50. The role of the United Nations information centres was critical — especially in the developing countries — and they should be adequately funded. The Department should consult closely with the host — and other — countries when introducing innovations. The development of websites in local languages must remain a primary concern; in that connection his delegation welcomed the Department's efforts to post programmes on the United Nations Radio website in Asian languages.

51. The Department should cover the Organization's most noteworthy activities, especially those that had a direct impact upon the lives of ordinary people, such as humanitarian activities and the work of the United Nations peacekeepers. It should work closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support in highlighting their success stories, because accounts of goodwill and down-to-earth cooperation could go a long way towards creating a positive image of the United Nations.

52. *Mr. Elsherbini (Egypt), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

53. **Ms. El Alaoui** (Morocco) noting with satisfaction the Department's reporting on the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of peacekeeping operations said that the events celebrating that latter seemed to be somewhat selective. It was important to recognize the role and sacrifices of all troop-contributing countries. For example, since 1960 Morocco had deployed over 50,000 troops in 13 peacekeeping operations, thereby contributing steadily to United Nations operations in that area.

54. Morocco, a country of varied cultures and civilizations, was sponsoring a number of interreligious and intercultural dialogues and believed that the United Nations should encourage such dialogue in order to combat the spread of Islamophobia. The Department of Public Information had a vital role to play in such efforts and should adopt a strategy of promoting rapprochement between religions, cultures and civilizations on the basis of dialogue, tolerance and mutual respect.

55. The Department should also highlight the role of the United Nations information centres. The current rationalization and restructuring of the network should not be dictated primarily by budgetary considerations but rather by an awareness of the contribution the

centres were making, in developing countries in particular.

56. By promoting international cooperation and mobilizing necessary funds, the Department, was a major force in narrowing the digital divide between North and South, encouraging the sharing of knowledge and guaranteeing the access of developing countries to the new information and communications technologies. The current imbalance in the Department's use of the six official languages needed to be remedied in the interests of linguistic parity and multilingualism. In that connection, the proposed new publication "*UN Affairs*" should also be made available in the six official languages, and its contents and political orientation as a voice of the United Nations should be decided by Member States.

57. **Mr. Jalil** (Pakistan) said that despite financial constraints, the Department had made commendable efforts to increase awareness of the achievements of and challenges faced by the United Nations. Close cooperation between the Department and substantive departments was of supreme importance, especially in connection with the role of the Strategic Communications Division in delivering and disseminating United Nations messages and promoting issues of interest to the international community.

58. His delegation attached high priority to the work of the United Nations Information Centres around the world, and was confident that the Department would continue to strengthen those centres.

59. Freedom of expression was a universal right that should nevertheless be exercised in a spirit of social responsibility. As one of its first actions, the newly elected Government of Pakistan had tabled legislation in the parliament to reverse all laws impinging on the freedom of the mass media. Pakistan was also one of the few countries in which Government policies had created an enabling environment for the private sector to drive growth in electronic media, as evidenced by the fact that 22 television channels and 64 FM radio stations had been granted broadcast licences.

60. In closing, he reiterated the request of other Member States that the Secretariat should provide additional passes to allow press officers to gain access to restricted areas and thus be able to report effectively on high-level meetings.

61. **Mr. Liu** Yutong (China) said that China appreciated the Department's efforts over the past year to better accomplish its mission of publicizing United Nations activities throughout the world. The United Nations had a unique role to play in addressing the many global issues confronting the international community, and the Department should redouble its efforts to promote the United Nations spirit of equality, mutual benefit and cooperation and encourage Governments and peoples of all countries to meet the challenges together. It should also remain committed to facilitating cultural exchanges between countries, strengthening dialogue among civilizations, and promoting friendly contacts among non-governmental organizations, civil society, academic institutions and the media, as well as youth exchanges among countries.

62. To better address current global challenges, especially those brought about by the financial, energy and food crises, and to promote a balanced, impartial and effective new order for information and communication, the Department needed to increase its focus on development issues and encourage the media and the public to promote common development and prosperity around the globe. It should provide accurate, objective information and continue to promote dialogue and exchanges among civilizations while encouraging and guiding the mass media to promote harmony and development of various cultures. Efforts should also be made to ensure that developing countries benefited from modern communication technologies; the information activities of the United Nations should narrow the existing disparities among countries and regions in the flow of information.

63. Finally, the Department should expand cooperation and exchanges with the media of developing countries, and provide more human resources and technological assistance to strengthen their capacity to develop and disseminate information. He also encouraged it to continue its training and internship programmes for journalists from developing countries, and suggested that it should make greater efforts to accommodate the needs of media from developing countries when organizing media pools.

64. **Mr. Bakhtin** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation was encouraged by the Department's efforts to highlight United Nations priority issues in the areas of peace and security, development and human rights. It welcomed the ongoing rationalization of United

Nations information centres, including the strategic redistribution of resources, expanded use of the information and communication technologies (ICT) and enhanced cooperation at the regional level. Only by effectively countering misinformation about the work of the United Nations could the Department and its network of information centres improve the Organization's public image. The United Nations information centre in Moscow served to raise awareness of the United Nations not only in the Russian Federation, but throughout the Commonwealth of Independent States.

65. Noting that the Department was expanding United Nations radio and internet services to include all official languages, he said that Russian language provision should also be strengthened in all areas. His delegation looked forward to participating in further consultations on the proposed transition of the *UN Chronicle* into *UN Affairs*; the latter should appear in all official languages. His delegation also supported the Department's efforts to bridge the digital divide and ensure that people everywhere had equal access to the benefits of the information society.

66. Noting the reference in paragraph 54 of the Secretary-General's report to the observance of the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust, he expressed the hope that the event would become a tradition. Commemoration of the Holocaust would be incomplete without a mention of the liberators, including the Soviet troops that had liberated the Auschwitz camp. In its efforts to raise awareness of the Holocaust, the Department should ensure that it included relevant and accurate information on the outcome of the Second World War. All attempts to rewrite history should be suppressed; the glorification in some countries of Nazi sympathizers, and the destruction of memorials to members of the anti-Hitler resistance, represented an alarming trend.

67. **Ms. Raz-Shechter** (Israel) said that the Department's task of conveying the United Nations message and ideals to the world was being made even more difficult by the growing cynicism and disbelief in wor d institutions.

68. Her delegation commended the Department for its efforts to promote Holocaust remembrance around the world noting that the "Holocaust and the United Nations outreach programme" had served as an effective tool for education and remembrance. During the past year, the Department had implemented a strategy to create the multifaceted Holocaust education programme; in collaboration with civil society groups and experts in the field of Holocaust and genocide studies, the Department was effectively educating future generations on the dangers of hate, bigotry and anti-Semitism. Nearly all the United Nations information centres had participated in training seminars under the programme, and a large number of field offices had organized Holocaust Remembrance Day observances and other activities. The Department's work on Holocaust awareness demonstrated inter alia the evolving educational role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century, and the Department's work in that area should be further supported by other Member States.

69. In conjunction with the long-standing Israeli initiative to educate the public on the principles and actions of the United Nations, her delegation invited the Department to open an information centre in Israel to foster dialogue and cooperation in the region. Israel's unique status as a multilingual and multicultural democracy and as the birthplace of the world's three great monotheistic religions, offered a unique opportunity for the Department.

70. However, her delegation was disappointed at the one-sided, biased and misleading picture of the facts on the ground in the Middle East put out by the special information programme on the question of Palestine. Given the Department's tight budget, it was her delegation's belief that by allowing that Programme to continue, the United Nations was failing to address more important priorities.

71. **Mr. Akasaka** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information) said that he was grateful to the members of the Committee for their comments, and assured them that the issues they had raised would be treated on a priority basis over the coming months. Finally, he said that he hoped to ensure that the objectives of the United Nations were communicated to the public in an impartial, coherent and timely manner.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

United Nations A/C.4/63/SR.15

General Assembly
Sixty-third session

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 15th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 23 October 2008, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Argüello ..... (Argentina)

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Agenda item 32: Questions relating to information (*continued*)

Agenda item 31: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects

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08-56538 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

Agenda item 32: Questions relating to information (*continued*) (A/63/21 and A/63/258)

1. **Mr. Al-Zayani** (Bahrain) commended the Department of Public Information for its innovative approach and for introducing self-analysis as a management tool in order to assess the effectiveness of its work. Recent events, including the commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the commencement of peacekeeping operations and the high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), testified to the increased effectiveness of the Department's work.

2. Since many people in developing countries lacked access to modern means of communication, traditional means should not be overlooked in disseminating the Organization's message. In that regard, United Nations information centres in developing countries played a key role and should not be closed without first consulting the host countries. Efforts should be made to close the digital gap between developed and developing countries and to establish a new world information and communication order, as called for in General Assembly resolution 34/182.

3. Finally, he called on the Department to continue its special information programme on Palestine until such time as a just solution to the question of Palestine was found.

4. **Mr. Badji** (Senegal) renewed his delegation's call for information that was accurate and balanced, and for parity in the use of the official languages, especially on the various websites. His delegation urged the Department to meet its translation needs by broadening its partnerships with Chinese, Russian and Spanish academic institutions, as doing so would have the added benefit of contributing to student awareness of the activities of the United Nations.

5. Any decisions to reorganize the United Nations information centres must be taken in close consultation with the host countries and must take into account the geographic and linguistic characteristics of the regions concerned. In that regard he recalled the initiative of the Senegalese authorities aimed at creating a regional United Nations information centre in Dakar to address the common concerns of the vast Francophone community.

6. While welcoming the various efforts made, in connection with the sixtieth anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping operations, to disseminate more accurate information about such operations, his delegation regretted the omission of the question of Palestine from the report of the Secretary-General. He urged the Department to intensify its efforts to implement its special information programme on the question of Palestine and invited all delegations to support, unconditionally, all recommendations and decisions regarding the Department's information programmes on that question.

7. Senegal firmly supported the conclusions contained in the report of the Committee on Information, and called for the traditional consensus on the relevant draft resolution in order to provide guidance to the Department in its work. There was also an urgent need for greater access to information technology on the part of the populations of the South; as a part of that effort, the Department should make more broadly known the importance of the Global Digital Solidarity Fund, an indispensable tool for narrowing the digital divide between North and South.

8. **Mr. Hosseini** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that to achieve its goal of promoting a just and more effective world information and communication order, the Committee on Information should increase its efforts to formulate an effective United Nations information policy aimed at ensuring greater understanding and respect among the peoples of different societies, cultures and religions. As the public voice of the United Nations, the Department of Public Information should continue its close cooperation with the Committee on Information.

9. While it appreciated the efforts made by the Department to publicize the work of the United Nations on a variety of issues, his delegation was of the view that the emergence of new issues should not distract attention from earlier issues of extreme importance such as that of Palestine. Continued effort by all United Nations bodies, especially the Department, to address all aspects of the question of Palestine should remain a top priority.

10. For many countries in the developing world, the digital divide and the lack of needed resources and equipment prevented access to timely and useful information about the work and activities of the United Nations. A concerted policy to bridge that divide, along

with an appropriate response to the financial and technical needs of developing countries in that regard, could help to strengthen the positive image of the United Nations in those countries and reduce the effects of the manipulated and monopolized media.

11. His delegation hoped that the relevant United Nations bodies, including the Department, could boost their efforts to assist developing countries address the challenge of the current unjust and inequitable media structure and serve as a fair and balanced voice for both developed and developing countries. The Department should continue to enhance its technological infrastructure in areas of public information and communications of special interest to developing countries.

12. The United Nations information centres were making valuable efforts to mobilize public opinion and convey information on United Nations activities to people in their host countries. Close consultation and coordination between the centres and the host countries, provision of new technologies to the centres, allocation of adequate resources, and careful attention to the geographic, cultural, social and economic characteristics of different regions were all important factors to be taken into account in that regard.

13. With regard to the proposed evolution of the *UN Chronicle* to a journal entitled *UN Affairs*, his delegation was of the view that once Member States' approval had been obtained, due consideration should be given to ensuring respect for multilingualism as well as a broader presentation of the work and activities of the United Nations by expanding the core audience for the periodical.

14. Finally, he expressed grave concern and dismay over a recent incident in which a Member State had used the United Nations premises to assist a body claiming to be a non-governmental organization to mount a biased and politically-motivated campaign against another Member State. He requested that the Secretary-General should take appropriate measures to prevent similar campaigns against Member States in the future.

15. **Mr. Mansour** (Tunisia) said that he was heartened that the Department's efforts to familiarize the peoples of the world with the work of the United Nations had led to a marked increase in the number of persons making use of the services available on the Organization's website. He was confident that the Department would give due attention to the question of parity among the six official languages of the United Nations.

16. Member States needed to enable the peoples of developing countries to benefit from the information revolution. In that connection, it was important to implement the recommendations contained in the Tunis Commitment and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society that had been adopted at the Second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society.

17. His Government had continued to pursue policies aimed at delivering the benefits of information technology to all levels of Tunisian society and to encourage invention and creation through cooperation with the technological and scientific sectors of various of Member States. To that end, Tunisia was hosting the sixth session of Med-IT@Tunis, a trade fair aimed at strengthening cooperation between regional and international information technology institutions.

18. **Mr. Vidal** (Uruguay) said his Government had recently begun to implement an initiative, entitled the "Ceibal Plan", designed to promote digital inclusion and reduce the existing technological gap with respect to other countries and among its own citizens, while facilitating better access to education and culture.

19. Under the Plan, every student and teacher in the first through sixth grades would be given a portable computer, along with the requisite materials and skills training for teachers. It was hoped that the Plan would foster innovative use of computers within the classroom, teacher training, formation of learning communities and the participation of families and society at large. It was expected that the Plan would reach 350,000 children and teachers by 2009; eventually, the idea was to move beyond the school system so as to bring computer education and use to a broader audience, as an example of successful cooperation between the Government and civil society.

Agenda item 31: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects

20. **The Chairman** invited the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and the Under-Secretary-General for Field Support to report on developments in the area of peacekeeping. The Under-Secretaries-General would be available at the close of

the meeting for an informal interactive dialogue with the members of the Committee.

21. **Mr. Le Roy** (Under-Secretary-General, for Peacekeeping Operations) said that peacekeeping operations played a central role in reducing the likelihood of future conflict and creating a framework in which normal development could resume. Some 110,000 United Nations peacekeeping staff were engaged in a wide range of activities across 18 current operations, 11 of which had been either deployed or strengthened in the previous five years. The African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) had been deployed during 2008, and those deployments were still ongoing.

22. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the mission was supporting political dialogue while providing security in the east. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was helping the Lebanese Armed Forces to extend State authority to and secure the south, in addition to undertaking mine action activities, as a result of which some 30,000 items of unexploded cluster munitions and other explosive ordnance had been cleared thus far. United Nations peacekeepers deployed as part of UNAMID were increasing the scope and frequency of patrolling so as to ensure the protection of civilians. In Côte d'Ivoire, the peacekeepers had advised the authorities and civil society on developing demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) programmes and in southern Sudan, the mission was promoting local efforts to re-establish courts and rehabilitate correctional facilities.

23. The United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) had assisted national efforts to incorporate gender equality into national legislation and, in Burundi, the mission was working to strengthen national capacity to promote and protect human rights. In Liberia and in Haiti the missions were working with United Nations country teams to deliver integrated reconstruction and early recovery assistance. In Timor-Leste and Chad the missions were supporting local efforts to reform the armed forces and police and, finally, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) had recently assumed a lead role in coordinating international aid.

24. Progress on the political, security and reconstruction fronts remained sporadic and fragile for some missions, including UNAMID and UNAMA, while others would probably need a major infusion of support to maintain progress in the face of the devastation wrought by the global financial meltdown, the food crisis and recent hurricanes.

25. Despite the daily challenges of peacekeeping, the United Nations was helping to improve the lives of millions of people living in or emerging from brutal conflicts, an achievement which relied largely on the direct support of Member States and strong cooperation between them and the Secretariat. In that connection, he intended to pursue peacekeeping reform and restructuring in cooperation with the Department of Field Support, in order to deliver on the Peace Operations 2010 professionalization agenda.

26. The Peace Operations 2010 agenda laid out priority areas for strengthening peacekeeping at various levels. At the organizational level, coherence and integration continued to be reinforced through new business processes and joint decision-making structures, in addition to the establishment of integrating functions and shared resources. His Department had begun to receive positive feedback from missions on the support provided to them by the seven Integrated Operational Teams, or IOTs.

27. With regard to resources, the Office of Military Affairs was also being strengthened to respond more effectively to contemporary military peacekeeping needs. With the support of Member States, it should be fully staffed by the following summer, with enhanced capacity to coordinate the military components of peacekeeping operations and to liaise closely with troop-contributing countries.

28. The Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions (OROLSI) had already had a qualitative impact upon the ability of field missions to provide more comprehensive support to national and international counterparts in the area of rule of law and security institutions. Such an integrated approach, aimed both at enhancing people's security in the short term and at laying the groundwork for longer-term peacebuilding, was needed in order to maximize the momentum for peace created by the deployment of a peacekeeping operation.

29. The Standing Police Capacity, an innovative tool capable of responding effectively to the diverse needs

of United Nations peacekeeping operations, had played a critical role in rapidly establishing the core police component of MINURCAT, also providing police advisers to Timor-Leste and Kosovo. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the Office of Internal Oversight Services had recently called for a strategic review of the management of United Nations peacekeeping police, given its exponential growth in size and complexity. The Police Division's review would be shared with Member States the following year.

30. The Peacekeeping Group continued to give priority to identifying lessons and good practices. The Division of Policy, Evaluation and Training was developing practical guidance for staff and identifying innovative approaches to problems such as those faced by peacekeepers tasked with protecting civilians in conflict zones. Such guidance was all the more urgent given the adoption of Security Council resolution 1820 (2008) on sexual violence in conflict. His Department was undertaking a number of initiatives aimed at reviewing current practice in that area.

31. Turning to the crucial issue of personnel, his Department continued to work towards ensuring that peacekeeping was able to attract and retain the most highly qualified and experienced candidates. To that end, he urged the Committee to approve the human rights reform proposals before it, also noting with appreciation the progress made by the Integrated Training Service in implementing the new Peacekeeping Training Strategy.

32. Sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations peacekeeping staff continued to bring great dishonour to the United Nations flag and to troop- and police-contributing countries and threatened to overshadow the generally positive impact of peacekeeping operations. While some progress had been made in combating the issue, much more remained to be done. Both the senior mission leadership and troop- and police-contributing countries must implement a zero-tolerance policy and treat the problem with the severity it deserved — both in its prevention and in investigations, prosecution and punishment, in accordance with due process. Member States must also inform his Department of any follow-up actions taken.

33. The United Nations Peacekeeping Group worked with an impressive array of partners ranging from United Nations agencies with programmatic expertise to the World Bank, and included bilateral national partners and humanitarian partners, all of whom complemented peacekeepers' efforts and facilitated achievement of their broad, multidimensional mandates. Effective cooperation in the field required a sustained approach that entailed mutual knowledge and concerted efforts to align structures, plans and programmes. He was therefore personally committed to leading a senior level group at Headquarters to provide leadership and oversight for United Nations integration in post-conflict contexts. His Department was also working with regional organizations and financial institutions to establish frameworks for predictable cooperation that encompassed coordinated planning and effective communication on participants' respective activities.

34. The demand for United Nations peacekeeping continued to grow ever wider, as did the scope of mandated mission tasks. At the same time — in Darfur, at least — his Department lacked the resources required to get the job done, and it was being tasked to work where there was clearly no peace to keep. Therefore, it would be necessary to consider how to address those demands more effectively in the context of the political, security, humanitarian and early recovery aspects of conflict resolution, and, most importantly, how to deal with the political and resource-related issues from which conflicts stemmed.

35. Despite the numerous challenges, peacekeeping was a sound investment for the international community. Not only did it bring stability and thereby lay the ground for economic revival, but it was far less costly than war.

36. It was obvious that the global financial crisis would have an impact on how the United Nations and Member States ensured accountability for how their money was spent. However, given the continuing demands made of his Department, peacekeeping budgets were unlikely to decrease. The Department was currently reviewing its activities in order to improve cost efficiency, and would report to the Committee in due course. Reporting on his recent visit to the Sudan, he noted that UNAMID faced great challenges as a result of slow troop deployment and lack of necessary resources. Committed peacekeepers in Darfur were struggling to achieve their mandate without the necessary equipment and logistical support and amid ongoing hostilities, underscoring the central

tenet of United Nations peacekeeping, namely, that there must be a peace to keep.

37. On a positive note, the Government of Sudan was increasing its cooperation with the Secretariat and UNAMID to facilitate the deployment of the mission. For its part, the Secretariat must strive for more rapid deployment than it had achieved thus far. His projection of 80 per cent of deployment being completed by March 2009 was a realistic one, given the enormous logistical challenges of deploying the mission to the centre of Africa. The applicable rules and regulations were totally ineffective to ensuring deployment of such magnitude and complexity, and would therefore have to be reviewed; to that end, he would work with the Under-Secretary-General for Field Support, the Department of Management and the Member States to bring about the needed reforms.

38. In order to succeed, peacekeepers needed to operate in an environment where at least the main actors had acceded to a peace process and to the deployment of a peacekeeping force. While that had not been the case in Darfur thus far, he hoped that current efforts to revitalize the peace process would bear fruit.

39. UNAMID highlighted the widening gap between mandates and resources at that level of worldwide peace operations. Ways must be found to either secure more resources or scale down mandates and expectations. In an area as vast as Darfur, air transport was essential; without the air assets that had been requested of Member States, even a fully deployed UNAMID would not reach anywhere near its full impact. Barring advancements in the political process, a functioning ceasefire and the necessary resources, the mission would not fulfil its primary mandate of protecting civilians. His Department would also have to consider and be prepared to respond to the impact that the International Criminal Court proceedings against the Sudanese President might have on the capacity of its missions in Sudan to carry out their mandate.

40. The international community must consider how best to respond to the unfolding situation in Somalia and it must re-galvanize peacekeeping efforts. The security response must, however, be appropriate to the task. Since the military assessment was that a classic United Nations peacekeeping force would be insufficient, the Secretary-General was seeking Member State support for a multinational force to stabilize the capital. Other options included a peacekeeping operation as directed by the Security Council. It was, however, important to bear in mind the principles and limitations of United Nations peacekeeping, and the risk of outright failure should the wrong tool be applied.

41. The economic crisis was having a particularly destructive impact on the countries where peacekeeping missions were deployed, and where people already lived under terrible tension. As the head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti had remarked, a poor, hungry and desperate population was simply not compatible with stability. The international community must remain vigilant and must maintain a steadfast commitment to those vulnerable countries, in order to secure the gains made. It must also support efforts being made on the ground to sustain recent gains that United Nations peacekeepers had paid the ultimate sacrifice to achieve.

42. While peacekeeping had come a long way, in many areas, the Department was overstretched, with missions lacking the human, material and political resources to fully address all expectations. The Department would need, together with Member States and the Department of Field Support, to address important issues that had arisen as a result of the surge in peacekeeping demands. That might include a review of comparative advantages in the light of the changed political, economic and security environment; a streamlining of mandates to make better use of limited resources; a reassessment of peacekeeping mandates and identification of additional tools for conflict resolution; benchmarks for measuring success and preparing the transition to longer-term peacebuilding activities.

43. It would also be important to consider the relative roles and interoperability of the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union and other peacekeeping stakeholders; whether the United Nations had the right systems to grapple with the logistical challenges of rapid deployment into distant terrain; and, how the two Departments might garner sustainable political and diplomatic support from Member States.

44. Lastly, he paid tribute to the troops, police and civilians deployed to some of the most intimidating locations on earth, whose efforts made a difference

between life and death and who were sometimes called upon to pay the ultimate sacrifice.

45. **Ms. Malcorra** (Under-Secretary-General for Field Support), noting that she was responsible for shaping the Organization's newest Department and ensuring that it delivered on its mandate, said that it was important to achieve the right balance between strategic positioning and urgent operational demands. It was not enough to be able to deploy fast; the support model must be improved to ensure more effective and efficient delivery, whether in Darfur, Chad or elsewhere. Progress continued to be made on the Peace Operations 2010 reform agenda and the Department now better understood how to adjust to a changing environment that demanded growth despite insufficient resources. Although she would be able to make a strong case for the Department when she reported to Member States on results achieved to date, certain key indicators of progress would be missing, since insufficient time had elapsed since the Department's establishment.

46. It was critical to retain a strong management system and ensure that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support worked closely at all levels. While the Integrated Operational Teams had brought positive results, they required further strengthening. Her Department's responsibility was very broad, yet its mandate was beautifully focussed. It ensured that political discussions held elsewhere were fully informed by the realities on the ground. Supporting both the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs, its task was to devise a model that delivered quality service to both.

47. The operational priority was to ensure that all missions deployed quickly and efficiently; the most immediate priority was UNAMID. She had visited Darfur twice and would be returning soon. An agreement had been signed with the Government of Sudan and the African Union to remove all obstacles to rapid deployment, and regular meetings would be held to update it as appropriate. The second priority was MINURCAT; like UNAMID, it had similar deployment challenges across an extensive terrain. In Afghanistan, UNAMA was expanding in a very difficult security environment, while the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) required a strengthening of aviation capacity, as well as an expanded presence in the eastern part of the country. Somalia, meanwhile, posed huge logistical challenges and scenario planning was under way.

48. Sustainable teams were essential; however, without fairer conditions of service and fairer contracts for field staff, the issue of staff retention would not be resolved. The current vacancy rate of 25 per cent was unacceptable, and the situation was exacerbated by mounting security concerns.

49. A new support strategy must strike the right balance between effectiveness and efficiency; resources were not infinite. Given the demand for rapid deployment it was necessary to come up with more standardized solutions, as well as a more comprehensive social strategy that recognized the existence of local, regional and international markets. The short planning horizon called for a complete rethinking of the procurement model. To ensure long-term sustainability, capacities must be maximized, including in the field of information and communication technology (ICT).

50. The Organization's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse must not only be ingrained in the system, but fully shared by all Member States and enforced on the ground. Conduct and discipline teams had been established to that end in all missions and a victim assistance policy was being implemented with system-wide collaboration. A shared commitment was needed to ensure that the Organization did not repeatedly face the criticism that it was not doing enough to remedy matters. It was not a problem of the Secretariat alone.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.

United Nations A/C.4/63/SR.16

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 16th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 24 October 2008, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Argüello ..... (Argentina)

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Agenda item 28: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*)

Agenda item 31: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects (*continued*)

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08-56717 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10:10 a.m.

Agenda item 28: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*)

Draft resolution A/C.4/63/L.2/Rev.1

1. **Mr. González** (Colombia), introducing the draft resolution, expressed the hope that it would be adopted without a vote. He pointed out that, in paragraph 23, the words "from 24 to 27 November 2008" should be replaced by the words "in 2009".

2. **The Chairman** said that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

3. *Draft resolution A/C.4/63/L.2/Rev.1, as orally revised, was adopted.*

Agenda item 31: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects (*continued*)

4. **Ms. El Alaoui** (Morocco), speaking on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, said that the establishment or extension of a peacekeeping operation should be strictly in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Operations should obtain the consent of the parties, refrain from the use of force, except in self-defence, and observe impartiality. They should also respect the full equality, political independence and territorial integrity of States and refrain from intervention in matters of domestic jurisdiction.

5. Primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security lay with the United Nations. In that context, she emphasized the importance of the joint African Union-United Nations action plan for United Nations assistance to African Union peacekeeping capacity-building in the short and long term.

6. From the outset, peacekeeping operations should be provided with political support, sufficient human, financial and logistical resources, a clearly defined mandate and an exit strategy, and they should be accompanied by a well-planned peace process that was supported by the parties concerned. Moreover, since the safety and security of United Nations and associated personnel in the field were of paramount importance — indeed the Non-Aligned Movement condemned the killing of, or any act of violence against, United Nations peacekeepers — troop-contributing countries should be fully involved in every aspect and at every stage of peacekeeping operations. Their experience could also be drawn upon when the Security Council implemented, extended or adjusted peacekeeping mandates. Better interaction between troop-contributing countries and the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations could contribute to a more inclusive consultation and decision-making process.

7. Since the responsibility for formulating concepts, policies and budgetary allocations relating to peacekeeping lay with the General Assembly, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations was the only body with the authority to review the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects.

8. The Non-Aligned Movement had taken note of the restructuring of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the establishment of the Department of Field Support. Given the importance of preserving unity of command and clear command structures, both in the field and at Headquarters, it attached great importance to the functioning of the Integrated Missions Planning Process.

9. The Non-Aligned Movement reiterated its commitment to zero tolerance for acts of misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel, whatever their category. The United Nations should ensure that steps were taken to vindicate any peacekeeping mission, troop-contributing country or individual peacekeepers falsely accused of misconduct. The revised draft model memorandum of understanding adopted by the General Assembly should be implemented, to avoid conflicting views on the exclusive jurisdiction of Member States and the role of the Office of Internal Oversight Services in that regard.

10. Regarding the question of security sector reform she said that such reform should be integrated into the broad framework of United Nations rule of law activities, to ensure that security sector reform activities did not duplicate work done in the rule of law area. The General Assembly should decide on its approach to such reform, while the formulation of strategies should be carried out at the intergovernmental level.

11. Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement were insufficiently represented, particularly at

professional level, in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support. The current imbalance of geographical representation should be rectified, particularly as it applied to unrepresented and underrepresented troop-contributing countries.

12. After expressing concern over the significant amounts of reimbursements currently owed by the United Nations to the troop-contributing countries, and reiterating the view that all Member States must pay their assessed contributions in full and on time, she drew attention to a disturbing fact, namely, that at the past two sessions, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations had been unable to adopt its report on time owing to controversy over specific issues. Such political discord did not help the Secretariat in preparing for peacekeeping operations.

13. Finally, recalling that a majority of the troops deployed on peacekeeping operations in recent years had been supplied by members of the Non-Aligned Movement, she called for a minute of silence to honour the peacekeepers who had lost their lives in the service of peace.

14. *At the invitation of the Chairman, the members of the Committee observed a minute of silence.*

15. **Mr. Ripert** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro; and, in addition, Armenia and Ukraine, said that the international community should continue to be guided by the recommendations of the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations. The European Union and the United Nations had cooperated closely over the past few years, thanks to their shared understanding of crisis management. They believed that all available instruments — political, civil and military — should be mobilized and that the transition from crisis management to the peacebuilding phase should be as smooth as possible. They also firmly believed in prevention.

16. With the launch in 2007 of its Instrument for Stability, the European Union had an additional effective tool at its disposal to respond rapidly and flexibly to crisis situations. In recent years, the Union had played a major role in peacekeeping. It was by far the biggest financial contributor to United Nations peacekeeping operations, accounting for over 40 per cent of the budget and also provided almost 12 per cent of uniformed personnel. The Union also participated directly in international peacekeeping missions. In recent years, it had led several crisis-management operations. The cooperation between the United Nations and the European Union was exemplified by the European Union Force in Chad and the Central African Republic (EUFOR Chad/CAR). The Union was also stepping up its cooperation with the African Union, including through the African Peace Facility, which aimed to support the African Union in peacekeeping operations run by Africans.

17. The European Union had contributed to United Nations peacekeeping efforts in a number of ways. In Georgia, mediation led by the Presidency of the Union had been instrumental in the achievement of a ceasefire in the conflict that had broken out in August 2008. The European Union had taken the initiative to protect ships belonging to the World Food Programme (WFP) off the Somali coast and it was currently establishing new forms of operational cooperation with the United Nations at sea.

18. In view of the importance of conflict prevention, the European Union emphasized the essential role of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission and the importance of security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. It also attached great importance to the protection of civilians and to mechanisms to combat impunity, in particular the International Criminal Court.

19. He welcomed the new booklet on United Nations peacekeeping operations and looked forward to the early development of other ground rules that took account of the lessons learned from recent peacekeeping operations. In that connection, the European Union welcomed the work being done on a doctrine for Formed Police Units, which would provide Member States and missions with much-needed clarification concerning their role. Member States should also be regularly informed about the progress made in strengthening the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and about the recruitment process within the new Office of Military Affairs. The police, too, had a crucial role in peacekeeping operations, so the Police Division might well be understaffed. The European Union set great store by the new security sector reform and rule of law competencies within the Department of

Peacekeeping Operations, particularly with regard to exit strategies.

20. Finally, he said that the safety and security of United Nations personnel were of paramount concern. The European Union strongly condemned recent attacks on such personnel and it paid tribute to the 2,518 peacekeepers who had lost their lives in the name of peace. It also called for improved cooperation between troop-contributing countries, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Safety and Security.

21. **Mr. Heller** (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that the basic principles of peacekeeping, namely consent of the parties, impartiality and use of force only in self-defence and in defence of the mandate authorized by the Organization, must be respected and participation in peacekeeping operations must be universal. Primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security lay with the United Nations. Regional arrangements must be in conformity with Chapter VIII of the Charter, must not supplant the United Nations and must be subject to the guiding principles of peacekeeping operations. While the various related resolutions adopted by the General Assembly in recent years were welcome, much remained to be done.

22. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations played an important role as a forum for dialogue on all issues relating to peacekeeping operations and as a place where Member States could express their views. Its work must continue to be strengthened. He hoped that, at its next session, the Special Committee's report would be adopted in a timely manner.

23. Steps must be taken to ensure unity of command, promote integration and strengthen operational capacity both at Headquarters and in the field. Continued close cooperation between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Field Support (DFS) was essential. Furthermore, it was necessary to improve coordination between the Security Council, the Secretariat and troop-contributing countries and to strengthen measures aimed at ensuring transparency and accountability.

24. While acknowledging that most peacekeeping personnel were committed to the Organization's objectives, he reiterated the Group's commitment to the policy of zero tolerance and to the implementation of measures to prevent and combat sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeeping personnel. Meanwhile, the protection and security of peacekeeping personnel remained a priority issue for Rio Group countries and should, therefore, be discussed in depth by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

25. He reaffirmed the Group's support for the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and welcomed the extension of the Mission's mandate. He also called on all Member States to deepen their commitment to the Government and people of Haiti, particularly in view of the natural disasters that had recently hit that country. Support to Haiti should be in accordance with the principles of international solidarity; donor community support was particularly important.

26. Given that proper training of peacekeeping personnel was essential to the success of peacekeeping missions, he noted with concern that, lately, such support had been very limited. He also noted with concern that some troop-contributing countries had yet to be reimbursed. The Secretariat must find practical ways of addressing the situation and report back to Member States as soon as possible. Meanwhile, Member States must pay their contributions in full, on time and without conditions.

27. Lastly, he paid tribute to all the men and women who had served under the United Nations flag and honoured the memory of the more than 2,400 peacekeeping personnel who had given their lives for such a noble cause.

28. **Mr. O'Brien** (Australia), speaking on behalf of the CANZ group (Australia, Canada and New Zealand), and noting that demand for United Nations peacekeeping missions continued to increase, said that when considering the future of United Nations peacekeeping, it was important to return to the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/305-S/2000/809). One of the key findings of that report concerned the need for clear, credible and achievable mandates and for the resources to match. Peacekeeping operation mandates must not create expectations that could not be met. The international community must be realistic about what was achievable within the resources that it was willing or able to provide.

29. The CANZ countries had particular concerns regarding the progress of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). He noted that the international community had faced challenges in mobilizing the needed resources and that numerous bureaucratic, logistical and operational problems persisted. DPKO should insist that the Sudan comply with its status-of-forces agreement. The Secretariat and the host Government must work together to ensure that UNAMID implemented its mandate fully and effectively. The challenges facing UNAMID must be borne in mind when considering new peacekeeping operations.

30. He welcomed the publication of the "capstone doctrine" earlier that year and looked forward to the development of subordinate doctrine and guidance. DPKO doctrine was essential to ensuring a common understanding of the issues facing United Nations field missions. The Secretariat should brief the Committee on progress made in developing guidance for United Nations peacekeeping operations, in line with the "Peace Operations 2010" reform agenda.

31. DPKO should also develop doctrine and guidance on civilian protection since military and police personnel deployed to protect civilians did not always receive appropriate guidance. The anticipated engagement with Member States on the development of doctrine on formed police units, meanwhile, was welcome.

32. He supported the ongoing discussions on a United Nations-wide policy on security system reform and hoped that the concept would be coordinated within discussions on peacekeeping policy. International support for reform of security institutions and mechanisms must be based on local ownership, democratic civilian control and whole-of-system integration.

33. The increasing complexity of peacekeeping operations and the deployment of peacekeepers in high-threat environments required the United Nations to make the best possible use of advanced technology, particularly in the areas of communications and surveillance. He hoped that DPKO would embrace the opportunities available to provide a safer environment for peacekeepers through the use of advanced capabilities such as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and looked forward to receiving an update from the Secretariat in that regard.

34. The CANZ countries were deeply saddened by peacekeeper fatalities. Peacekeeping operations must have the mandate and the capacity to defend United Nations personnel and facilities. The Secretariat, meanwhile, must have the analysis, early-warning and crisis capacity to prevent and manage such situations. Appropriate security arrangements for police and military experts on mission must be implemented. He looked forward to receiving an update from the Secretariat in that regard.

35. While significant progress had been made in dealing with serious misconduct, the problem of sexual exploitation and abuse continued. He called on all Member States to adhere rigorously to the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy and to discipline those who transgressed the norms of conduct. The international community should support the implementation of the United Nations Comprehensive Strategy on Assistance and Support to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by United Nations Staff and Related Personnel.

36. Finally, he noted that United Nations peacekeeping was a unique tool that had evolved dramatically over the past 60 years. It was a tool that must be used wisely; it might not be appropriate in all circumstances. As long-term participants in such efforts, the CANZ countries stood ready to work with other Member States and with the Secretariat to ensure that peacekeeping continued to play a positive and vital role in maintaining international peace and security.

37. **Ms. Hernández Toledano** (Cuba) expressed the hope that the restructuring of DPKO through the establishment of DFS would lead to greater efficiency, particularly with regard to unity of command both in the field and at Headquarters, and looked forward to the Secretary-General's related report.

38. Peacekeeping operations did not do away with the need to address the underlying causes of conflicts. They were a temporary measure aimed at providing a secure environment for the implementation of a long-term strategy towards sustainable economic and social development. Peacekeeping operations must be in accordance with the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter, particularly those relating to sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and non-intervention; must respect the principles of consent of the parties, impartiality and use of force only in self-defence; and must have a clear and

realistic mandate, concrete objectives, adequate resources and a clear exit strategy. Regional arrangements, while useful, must be in full compliance with Chapter VIII of the Charter.

39. It was important to continue strengthening cooperation between the Security Council, the Secretariat and troop-contributing countries, to give the latter greater input throughout the decision-making process. Recruitment should respect the principle of equitable geographic distribution and there should be greater transparency when filling high-level posts, in order to achieve an appropriate balance between developing and developed countries.

40. Her delegation supported the zero-tolerance policy and hoped that the memorandum of understanding between the Secretariat and the troop-contributing countries would be implemented without delay.

41. Lastly, she paid tribute to all those who had given their lives in the service of peace.

42. **Ms. Viotti** (Brazil) said that while United Nations peacekeeping missions were seen as a legitimate and effective way to help solve and mitigate the effects of conflicts around the world, the significant increase in troop and police deployments and the corresponding rise in peacekeeping mission budgets was placing a significant strain on the Organization and its Member States. Moreover, the current financial crisis threatened to divert essential resources away from peacekeeping. Against such a backdrop, mandates must be realistic and all missions must be given the resources they needed. Her delegation supported the Secretary-General's efforts to accelerate deployment of UNAMID, which was currently under considerable logistical and financial constraints, and it strongly condemned all acts of violence against UNAMID personnel and underscored that the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

43. Since 2004, Brazil had been contributing troops to MINUSTAH, which represented an important opportunity to put into practice an integrated approach to peacekeeping. No peace was sustainable without development and political reconciliation. An important aspect of the mission's mandate was the implementation of quick-impact projects to provide the population with the dividends of peace. However, the combined impact of recent hurricanes and the global food crisis threatened to undermine progress made in recent years and the Haitian people needed immediate and concrete help.

44. Brazil's experience in Haiti had inspired it in the coordination of the Peacebuilding Commission's Guinea-Bissau configuration. The Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau, approved earlier that month, aimed to mobilize resources and galvanize the international community to take concerted action in a number of critical areas. The use of Peacebuilding Fund resources for quick-win projects would help provide immediate support in critical areas while the long-term foundations for peace were being established. The implementation of the Strategic Framework, meanwhile, should contribute to a more prosperous and peaceful Guinea-Bissau.

45. Lastly, she said that Brazil was proud of its contribution to peacekeeping missions and paid tribute to all those peacekeepers who had lost their lives in the service of peace.

46. **Mr. Berrah** (Algeria) said that support must be provided to regional organizations willing to undertake bold peacekeeping initiatives. That support must be part of a global approach promoting the development of partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations.

47. He welcomed the fact that Africa continued to be a central focus of efforts to reform United Nations peacekeeping operations. The African Union had also undertaken a series of initiatives that would eventually enable it to establish an African Standby Force and that would help it build capacity in the areas of rapid response, mediation and conflict prevention. By taking such an approach, the States members of the African Union were demonstrating their willingness to take on additional peacekeeping responsibilities and to become less dependent on the international community for crisis resolution in Africa.

48. Although the United Nations was committed, in principle, to supporting African peacekeeping operations, political and practical issues remained. DPKO should clarify the type and amount of assistance it was able to contribute to the African peacekeeping effort and other partners, such as the European Union, the North American Treaty Organization and bilateral aid donors, should clarify what they could contribute to the institutional development and capacity-building of the African Union.

49. Moreover, logistical and financial issues had yet to be addressed in a satisfactory manner; donors were focused on funding training programmes and DPKO was concentrating on current operations rather than on long-term capacity-building. He expressed the hope that new cooperation opportunities would become available as a result of contacts made between the high-level panel on the financing of African Union peacekeeping operations and donors and the heads of the African Union.

50. The failure of warring factions to follow through on their commitments was a major factor in the escalation of conflicts in various parts of the world. Diplomatic initiative was all the more important when dealing with such challenges.

51. Finally, noting that Security Council resolutions were often somewhat idealistic given the complex and changing realities, he suggested that the Security Council should review the mandate and resources of certain peacekeeping missions more frequently in order to make any adjustments that might be necessary.

52. **Mr. Mohamed** (Sudan), recalling that 2008 marked the sixtieth anniversary of the commencement of United Nations peacekeeping operations, stressed that preventive diplomacy and peacebuilding were just as important as peacekeeping operations in the maintenance of international peace and security. Peace could not be achieved without strengthening efforts aimed at realizing economic and social development, eradicating poverty, mitigating the impact of rising food costs and addressing climate change.

53. Peacekeeping operations should respect the principles enshrined in the Charter and in their mandates, including respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs, consent of the parties, impartiality and non-use of force except in self-defence. Ignoring those principles or attempting to reinterpret them would reflect negatively on the credibility of the United Nations.

54. In respect of the situation in Darfur, his Government had fulfilled all of its obligations under Security Council resolution 1769 (2007) establishing the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and had given UNAMID all possible technical, logistical and administrative assistance. His Government was fully committed to the agreed goal of achieving 80 per cent deployment of UNAMID forces by March 2009. On the diplomatic front, a joint committee of the African Union and the League of Arab States had been established to coordinate various African, Arab and domestic initiatives aimed at reaching a political settlement.

55. Implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLM/A) was proceeding smoothly and in coordination with the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS). The necessary governmental structures and commissions at the federal and state levels had been established and a census had been completed in preparation for elections.

56. Security sector reform should take into account the need for sustainable economic and social development, as had been stressed by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and in the Principles and Guidelines for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. It should be noted that such reform was the sovereign right and primary responsibility of States and should not be used as a justification for imposing external models or dictates. In the context of the Organization, security sector reform, as it related to the mandate of peacekeeping operations, was the concern of the General Assembly.

57. Commending the role played by the African Union in UNAMID, he said that it was important to follow up the recommendations of the 2005 World Summit Outcome on supporting the Union's peacekeeping abilities and the development and implementation of a 10-year plan for capacity-building with the Union. His delegation looked forward to hearing the recommendations of the group of experts headed by the former Italian Prime Minister, Romano Prodi, on long-term and predictable funding for African-led peace support operations.

58. The United Nations policy of zero tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse in its peacekeeping operations should be strictly enforced. In that connection, his delegation was awaiting the results of the investigation into allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse committed in Juba.

59. In order for a peacekeeping operation to succeed, a clear exit strategy should be incorporated into its mandate. Procurement procedures should be transparent and favour local and regional suppliers. In order to counter the impression that those operations were the source of problems in host environments, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)

needed to pay more attention to "perception management" in order to win over the hearts and minds of local populations.

60. **Mr. Taleb** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, despite their increasing complexity, it was important that peacekeeping operations adhere to their mandates and respect the fundamental principles of the Charter, including respect for States' sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence. The consent of the parties concerned should be obtained and clear, credible and viable mandates established. In that connection, his delegation wished to point out that there were some who had repeatedly attempted to circumvent specific principles that governed peacekeeping, namely consent, non-use of force except in self-defence and impartiality.

61. His country greatly appreciated the sacrifices made by peacekeepers. The units engaged in mine removal operations in southern Lebanon were especially worthy of praise. Peacekeeping operations in the Middle East were measured in decades and, in the case of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), the Organization's first peacekeeping mission, had lasted for more than half a century. Peace in the region remained elusive because of Israel's continuing defiance of legitimate international resolutions, its hostility against its neighbours and its occupation of their territories.

62. His country attached great importance to enhancing the safety and security of peacekeeping forces and United Nations personnel. However, the use of private firms to provide security for United Nations offices would be counterproductive. There was a need to strengthen dialogue and cooperation among troop-contributing countries, DPKO and the Department of Field Support (DFS) with a view to setting clear and achievable mandates for peacekeeping missions.

63. In respect of the role of the United Nations in supporting security sector reform, his delegation was concerned by many elements of the report of the Secretary-General on the subject (A/62/659) for it introduced many ambiguous and controversial concepts regarding the role of security sector reform within the framework of the rule of law. In that connection, he emphasized that security sector reform was a nationally owned process and it was the sovereign right and primary responsibility of the country concerned to determine the national approach and priorities for such reform.

64. **Mr. Zaemskiy** (Russian Federation) said that while many remarkable achievements had been made in the area of peacekeeping, there had been several recent failures, the most notable being the forced suspension of the activities of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea as a result of confrontational and even obstructionist actions by one side. Another example was the atmosphere at the recent session of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations during which key groups had repeatedly attempted to push through their own priorities. While the situation had eventually been resolved, he cautioned that, should that confrontation continue, it could pose a grave threat to peacekeeping as a whole.

65. In the transition from traditional peacekeeping to more complex operations, it was important to take into account the interests of all the parties concerned, to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and to encourage national ownership; programmes should be implemented only with the consent of national Governments. It was time to develop a common strategy for the maintenance of international peace and security; the main elements of such a strategy should be preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

66. The military expertise of United Nations peacekeeping operations was insufficient. His delegation had submitted an initiative to revitalize the United Nations Military Staff Committee with a view to involving that Committee in the process of verifying the preparedness of assigned peacekeeping troops and services and providing the Security Council with reliable and up-to-date information. The intention had not been to infringe upon the Secretariat's powers but to improve United Nations peacekeeping military expertise on the whole.

67. His delegation supported plans to strengthen the Office of Military Affairs and the Police Division of DPKO, but stressed that financial discipline must be observed and that all proposals, including rules for personnel management, must be thoroughly reviewed. Any restructuring of United Nations peacekeeping operations should focus on the effective division of labour and should avoid duplication of functions.

68. Deployment of military components of United Nations operations required preliminary guarantees by

troop-contributing countries of their ability to provide peacekeeping operations with personnel and necessary logistics. An important indicator of the Organization's ability to quickly and effectively respond to emerging challenges would be the replacement of the European Union-led peacekeeping force (EUFOR) by a United Nations military component in the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT). Increasing cooperation between the Secretariat, national Governments and regional organizations in the process of mission deployment was crucial to making United Nations peacekeeping more efficient. In that context, the previously submitted proposal to decentralize peace maintenance responsibilities and to strengthen the role of regional organizations appeared all the more valuable. Regional organizations could provide excellent service, as long as they acted in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter.

69. United Nations peacekeeping was essential for maintaining international peace and security. The Russian Federation was prepared to increase its contribution to peacekeeping, particularly in the areas of humanitarian mine clearance and the training of police and other specialists. With a view to increasing Russian participation in the United Nations Standby Arrangements System, his Government invited the Secretariat to get acquainted on the ground with the engineer and military medical units of the Russian Ministry of Defence. In addition, his Government was prepared to consider sending a Russian air group to MINURCAT following a comprehensive review of the situation with the Secretariat.

70. **Mr. Acharya** (Nepal) said that the Security Council must refine the mandates of new peacekeeping operations and adjust the rules of engagement for field personnel accordingly. The core values of United Nations peacekeeping operations, such as consent of the parties, non-interference in the affairs of sovereign States and non-use of force except in self-defence, should not be compromised.

71. Military personnel played the most important role in peacekeeping operations. The varying backgrounds of the troops deployed posed a challenge that needed to be addressed with regard to maintaining the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations. Troop-contributing countries should be equitably represented in senior command positions in the field and at headquarters. Nepal was one of the five leading troop-contributing countries and it had pledged to increase that contribution, should there be a need if necessary. It would also like to see more of its civilians in United Nations field missions and peacekeeping operations.

72. He welcomed the development of the capstone principles, stressing that Member States should have ownership of them and that they should be endorsed by the Security Council. He also welcomed the report of the Independent Panel on Safety and Security of United Nations Personnel and Premises Worldwide and suggested that Member States should be given an opportunity to discuss the contents of the report before the recommendations were implemented.

73. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations should improve its working methods so that important decisions related to peacekeeping operations were not delayed.

74. The increase in civilian casualties in peacekeeping situations was unacceptable. Protection of civilians, including women and children, should be built into the mandates of peacekeeping operations and the recommendations produced in thematic resolutions and debates on that subject must be implemented. Moreover, the policy of zero tolerance for sexual abuse should be continued. Nepal would take action against any individuals for wrongdoing committed during peacekeeping assignments.

75. Finally, he stressed the need for exit strategies and pointed out that the current practice of limiting peacebuilding activities to a few countries was not a good one. Peacekeeping and peacebuilding should not be considered separately.

76. **Ms. Raz-Shechter** (Israel) commended DPKO for its work and reiterated her delegation's commitment to the restructuring of the Department, noting that strengthening and streamlining the work of DPKO was of critical importance. Israel was proud to be among the troop-contributing countries, although its role was modest.

77. Turning to current events, she said that Israel remained committed to the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), one of the most significant consequences of which was the deployment of an improved peacekeeping force, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), and it would continue to support UNIFIL troops. However, it remained deeply concerned about ongoing

developments along its northern border as Hizbullah was continuing to operate and to rearm itself in direct contravention of the resolution. That realignment constituted a threat not only to regional peace and stability, but also to UNIFIL troops and to the Lebanese Armed Forces.

78. The leaders of Hizbullah had acknowledged in explicit statements that Hizbullah was seeking to rearm itself and to adapt its techniques to the new realities on the ground. Therefore while welcoming the deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces in southern Lebanon as an important step in reinforcing the State's control over its entire territory, she noted that a number of reports suggested that some units of that army were turning a blind eye to Hizbullah's covert military build-up. The call in Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), paragraph 8, for "the establishment between the Blue Line and the Litani River of an area free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of UNIFIL" meant, not only, that Hizbullah personnel could not operate openly and with arms, but, also, that the Lebanese Government should ensure that new, non-Government military infrastructure and weapons were not being brought into that area.

79. Finally, after expressing her appreciation to the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for its continuous efforts since 1974 to implement the ceasefire and disengagement agreement between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic, she said that Israel wished to offer its gratitude and support to all the peacekeepers and troop-contributing countries.

80. **Mr. Natalegawa** (Indonesia) said that United Nations peacekeeping activities required robust support from the entire United Nations system. Indonesia, for its part, had undertaken to increase its contribution to peacekeeping efforts and would be deploying more personnel to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

81. The Capstone principles or doctrine was one reference for peacekeeping operations; even though the views of Member States had been considered informally during the preparation of the document, the Secretariat should consult more formally with delegations on any improvements. In addition, further development of the peacekeeping doctrine should be based firmly on the guiding principles of United Nations peacekeeping: consent of the parties, impartiality and non-use of force except in self-defence and in defence of the mandate. Self-defence had been defined exhaustively by international law and attempts to reinterpret its meaning should be avoided.

82. Compliance with the United Nations peacekeeping principles together with a realistic Security Council mandate, which was responsive to significant changes on the ground, were crucial for the effectiveness and safety of peacekeeping missions, and the whole United Nations system should be prepared to come to the aid of peacekeepers when necessary. In addition, cooperation, regular consultation and coherence among the Security Council, the troop-contributing countries and the Secretariat were critical to the success of peacekeeping objectives. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations could play an important role by convening exchanges with troop-contributing countries and other stakeholders. It should envisage entering into interactive dialogue with the Governments concerned through video links, so as to receive information directly. The United Nations should also ensure a coordinated approach between its own and other entities leading to integrated strategies with sustainable peace as their goal.

83. While United Nations peacekeeping was an indispensable tool for world peace and stability, the main causes of conflict needed to be addressed in order to ensure a lasting peace. In addition, when a country was moving towards a post-conflict peacebuilding stage, an integrated and balanced approach with a focus on security as well as development was imperative.

84. Concrete partnerships with the regional and subregional organizations should be explored so as to make use of the comparative advantages of the different stakeholders; the joint efforts of the African Union and the United Nations were a good example of such collaboration. Regular and proper training of peacekeepers was essential; therefore, the Integrated Training Service should provide additional support to the national training facilities of troop-contributing countries. In addition, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should provide information on its criteria for recognizing national peacekeeping training centres. Lastly, while appreciating the efforts of the Secretariat to improve the participation of Member States in the selection of senior staff in the United Nations system, Indonesia believed that the selection process could be

made more transparent by reflecting the contribution of Member States to peacekeeping operations.

85. **Mr. Okuda** (Japan) said that Japan had always been a staunch supporter of peacekeeping operations. Recently, it had hosted a seminar honouring 60 years of United Nations peacekeeping, which had contributed to the discussion on how peacekeeping should evolve and how to interrelate the stages of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding that were essential for achieving sustainable peace and stability in post-conflict nations. Discussions were also held on how to increase Japan's contribution of personnel to United Nations peacekeeping operations. Staff officers of the Japan Self-Defence Forces were being sent to the United Nations Mission in the Sudan for the first time and Japan would seek more ways to contribute to peacekeeping operations.

86. Most peacekeeping missions were deployed in Africa, and many African troops were involved in those missions; it was therefore imperative to support peacekeeping capacity-building in African nations. In 2007, Japan had made a significant financial contribution to launch the activities of the Chadian Police for Humanitarian Protection; and, in 2008, it had contributed $15.5 million to support peacekeeping training centres in Africa.

87. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support should cooperate closely and provide full support to military and police components, for these components continued to play a fundamental role in peacekeeping missions even though the non-military components of missions had been growing significantly. The importance of protecting the safety and security of each mission could not be overemphasized. Adoption of advanced safety and security measures should be vigorously considered and safety standards for utilizing commercially contracted aircraft for United Nations operations carefully reviewed.

88. Reports of misconduct among peacekeepers were of great concern because they undermined the credibility of the United Nations. Japan emphasized its commitment to instilling the highest levels of skill, and discipline in its troops prior to their deployment. It had also launched a programme to train civilian personnel in Asia to work in United Nations field missions.

89. Lastly, he reiterated the importance of collaboration between troop-contributing countries and other stakeholders, including major financial contributors and the Security Council, especially when decisions on peacekeeping had to be made. The Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations was an appropriate forum for such discussions and Japan was ready and able to contribute to them.

90. **Mr. Smith** (Fiji) said that his delegation was concerned about increasing attacks on peacekeepers, and United Nations personnel and facilities. It strongly condemned all acts of violence, and reiterated its support for all measures undertaken to promote the safety and security of peacekeeping personnel. Member States should support the work of restructuring the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support to ensure full compliance with General Assembly resolution 61/279. His delegation looked forward to the short-term review and assessment to be undertaken by the Department of Field Support.

91. The increasing complexities of peacekeeping operations called for constant review of planning and execution strategies to ensure that they were multidimensional. Mandates must be designed in such a way as to ensure the seamless transition of United Nations efforts from peacekeeping to peacebuilding, and be matched with the appropriate financial, personnel and material resources. If they were to succeed, the strategies should be based on national ownership. In addition, strategies to support the cross-cutting issues of gender, children and HIV/AIDS should be based on the specific needs of the local communities in conflict situations.

92. His delegation welcomed the recent publication of a peacekeeping manual to provide a common understanding of peacekeeping doctrine and terminology and underscored that the personnel selected for peacekeeping missions should have the required professional background, expertise and training. Fiji was developing a peacekeeping training centre to enhance its ability to prepare its peacekeepers for the ever-changing demands.

Rights of reply

93. **Mr. Taleb** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the comments made by the representative of Israel were misleading and were part of a desperate campaign to divert the public's attention away from the daily crimes

committed by that terrorist State in the Arab-occupied territories. The follow-up reports of the Secretary-General made no mention of arms trafficking across the border between Syria and Lebanon. Moreover, the reports of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) had underscored the cooperation of all the parties, including Hizbullah. Conversely, they had described constant violations by Israel of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) and of Lebanon's territorial integrity. The comments made by the representative of Israel did not change the reality.

94. Former Secretary-General Kofi Annan had described a long list of abuses; Israel seemed to be systematically targeting United Nations peacekeeping forces, their duty stations, and even United Nations personnel. The list commenced with the murder, in 1962, of the United Nations mediator in the Arab-Israeli conflict, Count Bernadotte. In 1996, Israel had targeted a United Nations compound in southern Lebanon, killing 106 civilians who had taken refuge there and, in 2006, it had shelled two United Nations posts. The report of the Canadian Armed Forces mandated to investigate the attacks — which had killed the Canadian commander and three other observers — underlined that the posts had been deliberately targeted. There had also been an attack on United Nations peacekeeping forces in southern Lebanon. Syria was still waiting for an apology; Israel always classified such acts as "operational errors". The latest victim, a Belgian soldier, had been killed in September while on a mission to clear mines set by Israel in southern Lebanon, just 48 hours before the ceasefire.

95. **Mr. Mosseni** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his Government had always supported the cause of a stable, just and durable peace in the Middle East and, in line with that position, had always given its spiritual support to the just struggle of the peoples of the region against occupation and the systematic violation of human rights of the Palestinian people. His delegation was not surprised that Israel, the main cause of instability in the region, had once again embarked on a political campaign to divert attention from its criminal record. It hoped that the presence of a new member of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations would not lead to politicization of that eminent body's noble work.

96. **Ms. Raz-Shechter** (Israel), noting that she would not respond to every vicious allegation, referred the representative of Iran to the many reports in the international media regarding Iran's assistance to terrorist organizations and the training of Hizbullah fighters in Iran. Security Council resolution 1747 (2007) had referred to Iran's failure to meeting the requirements of the International Atomic Energy Authority and had prohibited Iran from exporting weapons to countries in the area.

97. In the case of the Syrian Arab Republic, she again referred to the situation on the ground and to Security Council resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006) which referred to Syrian smuggling of weapons to Lebanon and to Hizbullah. She also mentioned Syria's assistance to certain Palestinian extremist groups and the rockets that had been launched against Israel in the summer of 2006.

98. **Mr. Taleb** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that everything he had mentioned was the truth, as documented in reports and documents of the United Nations. The representative of Israel should realize that although Israel had managed to deceive some people for a short period of time, it could not deceive everyone all the time. Israel had a culture of death and destruction which had been documented by the United Nations.

99. **Mr. Mosseni** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation was used to hearing such allegations from the representative of Israel, and saw no need to respond to them.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 27 October 2008, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Cujba (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Republic of Moldova)
later: Mr. Elsherbini (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Egypt)

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In the absence of Mr. Argüello (Argentina), Mr. Cujba (Republic of Moldova), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 31: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Mungkalaton** (Thailand) said that his Government believed that the various regions should take more responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Thailand itself had for the last two decades provided nearly 20,000 troops to peacekeeping operations around the globe.

2. The root causes of the increasingly complex conflicts the United Nations dealt with had to be addressed and, in order to prevent countries from relapsing into conflict, peacekeeping operations must also involve national empowerment and long-term capacity-building in areas such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, development, good governance, security sector reform and the establishment of institutions, as a way of preparing countries for the post-conflict peacebuilding phase. Such multidimensional operations demanded a common vision and strategy, requiring better cooperation among all those involved, both within the United Nations system and elsewhere. Unity of command was also the major challenge facing the restructured Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the new Department of Field Support, which should follow a coordinated approach such as that exemplified by the integrated operations teams at Headquarters that supported field missions.

3. Peacekeeping operations must strictly observe international human rights and humanitarian law with regard to the protection of civilians in armed conflict and to the question of sexual exploitation and abuse, and they must at the same time strictly observe the three basic principles of consent, minimum use of force and impartiality.

4. Although the Sixth Committee was responsible for considering the criminal accountability of United Nations personnel and experts on missions, the question directly affected peacekeeping operations and needed clear legal definition, since between 2004 and 2006 over 300 peacekeepers had been investigated for alleged criminal acts.

5. The safety of peacekeeping personnel was another issue of paramount importance. The credibility of the United Nations was at stake if a peacekeeping mission could not protect itself, let alone the people it was mandated to protect. The recent deadly attack on troops in Darfur was a classic example of a mission operating in a place where there was very little peace. The African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) required more resources, a better strategy and the deployment of well-equipped, effective personnel if it was to respond properly to emergencies and survive them. Also alarming were the attacks targeting the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). The reasons behind all such attacks must be understood and, if necessary, the strategy of the relevant peacekeeping operation should be revised.

6. There had been a surge in the demand for peacekeeping operations from year to year, and no doubt the enormous budget required to support them would only increase. It was time to plan for that. His delegation paid tribute to all who had served or were serving in the peacekeeping missions, and especially to those who had made the ultimate sacrifice in order to maintain international peace and security.

7. *Mr. Elsherbini (Egypt), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

8. **Mr. Wolfe** (Jamaica) observed that the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations involvement in peacekeeping was an occasion not only to pay tribute to those who had served the cause of peace, but also to take stock of the many lessons learned and to assess how to move forward.

9. The peacekeeping budget had ballooned to over $7 billion annually, almost doubling the Organization's regular budget. While peacekeeping was undoubtedly very cost-effective, its growing cost was putting increasing pressure on small developing States with limited resources that were facing particular constraints in a time of global crises. Efforts must assuredly be made to find new approaches to the establishment of peace and security in countries emerging from conflict.

10. The international community should be assiduous in addressing and, indeed, eliminating the root causes of conflict, such as poverty, competition for scarce resources, unemployment and the systemic violation of human rights, to name a few; and it must develop early warning and early response systems to developing

conflicts. At a minimum, the developed countries must honour their commitments to help the developing countries meet their social and economic goals.

11. Significant investment should be made in the conflict-prevention capabilities of the United Nations, in part by strengthening the Department of Political Affairs so that potential zones of instability and tension could be identified, and mediation and other steps taken to avert full-scale conflict. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Peacebuilding Commission must work together more seamlessly, since both were striving to achieve the same ends.

12. In addition to the welcome renewal of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), in a country that had been severely tried in the past year on several fronts, the international community must supplement the capacity-building projects of the Caribbean Community in Haiti by addressing the country's long-term social, economic and development needs.

13. In Darfur, the delay in making UNAMID fully operational was a matter of grave concern. All Member States should provide the funding, equipment or personnel needed to launch that operation properly and all must desist from actions that could deepen the crisis, jeopardize the safety of the civilian population and United Nations personnel or prevent access to humanitarian relief.

14. Jamaica was steadfast in its support for the work of all United Nations departments and bodies involved in peacekeeping. Unfortunately, however, there had been recurrent delays in the issuance of the annual report of the main policymaking body, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

15. The United Nations must maintain its zero-tolerance policy with regard to sexual abuse and exploitation on the part of peacekeeping personnel, which tarnished the reputation not only of those individuals but, more importantly, of the United Nations and their countless other fellow peacekeepers. The safety and security of peacekeeping personnel also remained a primary concern in the light of the recent deadly attacks in Darfur. Jamaica, with police officers in missions in Timor-Leste, Darfur, Liberia and soon, Haiti, looked forward to building on that modest contribution in the years to come.

16. **Mr. Muburi-Muita** (Kenya) said that his country's contribution of troops to United Nations peacekeeping missions over the years and its mediation of conflicts in its region was testimony to its commitment to the cause of peace. Kenya currently had troops serving in seven missions, six in Africa and one in Kosovo. It firmly supported a multilateral approach to conflict resolution and supported the maintenance of international peace and security by regional organizations. The African Union and the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations should strengthen political and technical cooperation with each other and with subregional organizations, and the African Union's peacekeeping capabilities should be expanded. Since the United Nations could not be everywhere at all times, the peacekeeping burden must be shared through genuine partnerships, allowing the Department to focus on its core business and move away from areas it was not able to handle. The various international, regional and subregional centres in Kenya providing peacekeeping support should be assisted by the international community.

17. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support should coordinate their work. His delegation looked forward to the Secretary-General's report on the restructuring process, which should allow speedier processing of death and disability claims for personnel serving in peacekeeping missions. The current imbalance in the geographical representation of senior staff in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations was another matter that should be redressed.

18. Any misconduct, or even a perception of impropriety was detrimental to the relations between peacekeepers and the local population. All United Nations personnel should behave in a manner that preserved the image, credibility, impartiality and integrity of the Organization. The troop-contributing countries had primary responsibility for maintaining discipline among their contingents and for investigating charges of misconduct, with appropriate assistance from the United Nations. The United Nations must continue to maintain a policy of zero-tolerance towards sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, and must assist the victims. Awareness training before deployment, timely rotation and opportunity for recreation could minimize such incidents and should be included in any memorandum

of understanding between the United Nations and the troop-contributing countries.

19. The safety and security of United Nations personnel was paramount. There must be constant security surveys by the heads of peacekeeping missions, regularly updated, to ensure that peacekeepers were not exposed to foreseeable dangers; and in general, the information and analysis components of senior mission management should be improved.

20. **Mr. Khair** (Jordan), recalling that recently Jordanian peacekeeping troops had worked unstintingly alongside their counterparts in MINUSTAH to provide critical help in the aftermath of the devastating disasters that had struck Haiti, said that the many dimensions of the work of peacekeepers, who were successfully helping countries emerge from a troubled past, deserved to be celebrated during the sixtieth anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping. Jordan acknowledged the debt owed to the United Nations personnel who had worked in its own unstable and conflict-ravaged region to preserve the peace. It was proud to be part of that same lofty enterprise in other parts of the world. With over 3,000 Jordanians currently participating in peacekeeping missions, his country was now seventh in terms of its contribution to the cause.

21. Jordan was part of the small group of troop-contributing countries consulting closely with the Security Council on the various stages of United Nations peacekeeping operations, especially where risks were involved. Peacekeeping, however, could not be a substitute for a permanent solution, and United Nations operations should be part of a larger, inclusive peace process that was carefully designed and had the support of the parties concerned. Any peacekeeping mission must abide strictly by the agreed guiding principles: consent, non-use of force except in self-defence, impartiality, clearly defined mandates and secure financing.

22. To ensure the safety and security of personnel, regular risk assessment and information-sharing was crucial and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations must keep its channels open to the permanent missions at Headquarters to guarantee prompt transmission of information with regard to casualties or incidents.

23. His delegation remained concerned about the staffing of that Department and the Department of Field Support. Jordan itself was not sufficiently represented at the professional level despite its readiness, and the Secretary-General must deal with the current geographic imbalance and underrepresentation of troop-contributing countries in administrative positions. In the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, the discernable political divisions among its members should be set aside, for they would only hamper efforts to meet the peacekeeping challenges. He paid tribute to the courageous peacekeepers who had lost their lives in a noble cause.

24. **Mr. Khan** (Bangladesh) said that United Nations peacekeeping had become a powerful, indispensable tool for keeping peace in regions across the globe emerging from conflicts. The role of peacekeepers had changed markedly in recent years and now extended to humanitarian and development needs, disarmament, national reconciliation, peacebuilding, promotion of the rule of law, facilitation of the return of refugees, intermission cooperation and the like.

25. Bangladesh was proud to be taking an active part in peacekeeping operations even in the most difficult and hostile environments. In the past 20 years, nearly 80,000 Bangladeshi peacekeepers had participated in 33 missions, and currently 10,000 were deployed in 14 missions across the world. As one of the major troop-contributing countries, its troops had comprised at least 10 per cent of the peacekeeping forces for the past 12 years. The price of peacekeeping had at times been very high: nearly 100 Bangladeshi peacekeepers had sacrificed their lives. His delegation paid tribute to all those who had died in the cause of peace.

26. Peacebuilding was now a specialized field, as recognized in the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, Support Office and Fund. At the same time, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations had been restructured and the Department of Field Support had been created. It was time to take stock of the outcome of such a major restructuring exercise.

27. Meaningful, frequent dialogue among the Security Council, the troop-contributing countries and the Secretariat in all phases of mission planning and implementation was critical to the success of a mission, bringing the necessary expertise to bear and giving all concerned a sense of ownership and unity. An adequate number of forces should be deployed in any given

mission, and contingents should be given responsibilities that were within their capabilities and the agreed limits. Memorandums of understanding should be signed quickly upon deployment of contingents, and reimbursements for maintaining troops in the field and providing contingent-owned equipment should be timely. If Member States paid their assessed contributions in full and on time, the problems related to the peacekeeping budget would be resolved.

28. In matters of conduct and discipline, Bangladesh unequivocally supported the zero-tolerance policy relating to sexual misconduct and abuse by mission personnel. Stringent measures should be put in place both at the organizational and national levels, and the revised draft memorandum of understanding adopted by the General Assembly might help to deal with the issue more effectively.

29. **Mr. Liu** Zhenmin (China) said that considerable progress had been achieved in peacekeeping operations over the past year. Structural reform of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support was proceeding apace, and cooperation between the United Nations and other regional organizations was expanding. A number of important actions were needed in order to meet new challenges and bridge the gaps between the Organization's capabilities and the expectations of Member States.

30. First, it was necessary to continue to uphold the three basic principles governing peacekeeping operations, namely the consent of Member States, neutrality, and the non-use of force except in self-defence. It was only by abiding by those principles that the legitimacy of peacekeeping operations could be ensured. Secondly, deepening the reform of peacekeeping operations must be and optimizing their management was an important means of achieving further progress. Some improvements in efficiency, resource management, command systems, partnerships and training had already been achieved, but new international situations demanded peacekeeping operations of increasing length and complexity, as well as greater and more seamless cooperation and coordination among the partners involved. Thirdly, strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations was an important factor in the success of peacekeeping operations, and would ensure that the planning and implementation of such operations were more responsive to the actual needs on the ground. The recently adopted Security Council resolution 1809 (2008) emphasized the necessity of building effective partnerships with regional organizations, and as such provided an example for future endeavours in that regard.

31. China attached importance to, and had consistently supported the role of, United Nations peacekeeping operations in maintaining international peace and stabilizing conflict situations. To date, over 11,000 Chinese peacekeepers had taken part in 18 peacekeeping operations; the special engineering unit sent to Darfur in the Sudan constituted a further important step in China's continuing active participation in United Nations peacekeeping.

32. **Mr. Palihakkara** (Sri Lanka) said that, in view of the increasing complexity and scope of United Nations peacekeeping operations, he wished to reiterate the importance of strictly observing the basic principles of the United Nations in governing such operations, namely the consent of the parties, neutrality and the non-use of force, except in self-defence. Observance of those principles would continue to be essential to the success of peacekeeping missions and to ensuring the safety of peacekeeping personnel. However, the success of peacekeeping missions also depended on the political support they received and on the adequate and timely provision of financial, logistical and human resources.

33. Peacekeeping operations had provided opportunities for personnel from different parts of the world to work together for common goals, but such efforts should be made mutually rewarding for the personnel involved and for the local peoples they served. Effective and efficient coordination between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support and with field missions at all levels was of paramount importance to the success of peacekeeping operations. In order to ensure the safety and security of peacekeeping personnel, peacekeeping missions should have clearly defined mandates and achievable targets, as well as contingency plans and exit strategies. Furthermore, troop-contributing countries should be closely involved in decisions with respect to new missions or the extension of the mandates of current missions. The expertise and experience of troop-contributing countries should be put to the best use, and undue communication delays should be prevented, especially in emergency situations involving casualties.

34. In view of the need for adequate staffing of the two departments, he once again called on the Secretary-General to ensure fair and equitable representation of troop-contributing countries from the developing world on the decision-making and professional-level staff, in the Secretariat as well as in the field missions. An efficient and transparent competitive recruitment system was needed for selecting candidates for United Nations vacancies.

35. His delegation remained committed to the policy of zero tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations. In that regard, the revised model memorandum of understanding should be incorporated into existing memorandums of understanding between the United Nations and troop-contributing countries for early implementation, as that would clarify issues of jurisdiction. While his delegation did not condone violations of the United Nations code of conduct by peacekeepers, it deemed it important to safeguard the principle of presumption of innocence and to prevent the media from sensationalizing unsubstantiated accusations. In a broader context, many complex issues arising in the course of multilateral peacekeeping could be addressed through open, transparent and constructive engagement, for which the Special Committee on Peacekeeping was the best and most capable forum.

36. **Mr. Davide** (Philippines) said that the Philippines had been an active partner in United Nations peacekeeping for almost five decades, and took particular pride in being among the top three police-contributing countries. As part of its ongoing commitment to United Nations peacekeeping, the Philippines was prepared to participate in the United Nations Standby Arrangements System (UNSAS) and expected to complete screening of another 600 police officers by the end of October 2008. It had also completed its own policy framework and guidelines on participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations, which institutionalized the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse as well as all other possible misconduct in mission areas by Filipino peacekeepers.

37. He expressed appreciation to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for approving and accepting the secondment of two Philippine Army officers to the Office of Military Affairs, thus paving the way for the sustained participation of the Philippines in peacekeeping activities at United Nations Headquarters. He also commended the Public Affairs Unit of the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations for its efforts to increase public understanding and appreciation of the role of United Nations peacekeepers; close cooperation between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Public Information would be needed to undertake information projects targeting audiences in the troop-contributing countries as well as the host countries, thereby broadening awareness of the contributions of peacekeepers.

38. He reiterated the need to ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers and to inform troop-contributing countries of developments related to peacekeeper deaths or injuries. In that regard, he drew attention to the fact that it was only after eight months and repeated requests for information by his Permanent Mission that UNMIS had confirmed that the Filipino peacekeeper who had recently died from malaria while serving with that Mission could have been prevented had he been properly diagnosed. His delegation was of the view that deaths from health-related or other non-hostile causes could be prevented not only by proper screening, training and supervision, but also through the provision of the support systems needed in the field.

39. **Mr. Kyslytsya** (Ukraine) said that his delegation aligned itself with the statement delivered by the representative of France on behalf of the European Union. Any reform of peacekeeping must be aimed at enhancing the efficiency of United Nations peacekeeping, which must be carried out in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international law. The Secretariat should continue to work with Member States to ensure that quick deployment reserves operated effectively and at their full capacity, and should play a more proactive and flexible role in the integrated mission planning process, both at United Nations Headquarters and in field missions. He welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to restructure the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, but in view of current shortcomings, Member States, the Security Council and the Secretariat needed to work more closely together. He also shared the concerns of other delegations regarding the lack of transparency in the recruitment process, noting that priority should be given to highly qualified, well-educated and experienced candidates from troop-contributing countries.

40. Ukraine was deeply concerned over the increasing threats to United Nations peacekeeping and humanitarian personnel, especially the recent incidents involving targeted attacks on UNAMID and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) peacekeepers. Ensuring the safety of such personnel must be central to any peacekeeping operation. The levels of risk must also be assessed prior to the establishment of a mission as well as periodically throughout its mandate. He expressed the hope that the recommendations of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations regarding its investigation into the events of 17 March 2008 in Mitrovica, Kosovo would be properly implemented by the UNMIK authorities.

41. He supported continued efforts to improve training for United Nations peacekeeping operations personnel, and looked forward to a substantive dialogue on consolidating military, police and civilian training capacities in the context of the Integrated Training Service. Further development of partnership and interaction with regional and subregional organizations could help the United Nations to meet current challenges in peacekeeping. He also welcomed the establishment of the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group, and attached great importance to efforts aimed at maintaining high standards of conduct of all United Nations personnel; acts of sexual exploitation and abuse as well as other forms of misconduct by United Nations peacekeepers undermined confidence in the Organization and could not remain unpunished.

42. **Mr. Sin** Son Ho (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and the guiding principles of peacekeeping operations were frequently abused. In the Security Council, decisions on peacekeeping operations were taken in the interest of particular States, resulting in a loss of confidence among Member States in the Security Council and in United Nations activities overall. To ensure that peacekeeping operations were carried out in accordance with the core principles of respect for sovereignty, non-interference, consent of the parties concerned, and impartiality, the fairness and accountability of the Security Council in all its actions should be guaranteed. Those peacekeeping operations that did not help to end conflicts or were no longer effective in maintaining international peace and security should be terminated. Urgent measures should be taken to alleviate the heavy burdens imposed on developing countries by United Nations peacekeeping operations.

43. His delegation was particularly concerned that actions harmful to the image and credibility of the United Nations should not be tolerated. As an example, he cited the use of the term "United Nations Command" in South Korea to describe what was actually an entity of the United States Army that had no relation at all to the United Nations. It was highly abnormal that such an entity should continue to exist 55 years after the signing of an armistice agreement in Korea; it had become an obstacle to the implementation of the Declaration for Development of North-South Relations and Peace and Prosperity of 4 October 2007, and should be dismantled immediately in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 3390 (XXX).

44. **Ms. Juul** (Norway) said that given the prevalence of sexualized violence as a weapon of war, United Nations personnel must fully adhere to the Organization's zero-tolerance policy on such abuse. Breaches of that policy undermined operational effectiveness and confidence in the United Nations as a whole.

45. The increase in the number, size and complexity of peacekeeping operations represented a tremendous challenge, one that the Organization could only meet by making use of all available resources in the field in an integrated manner, while also ensuring adequate coordination between departments at Headquarters and relevant United Nations entities. Indeed, the challenges facing the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) clearly illustrated the importance of integration and cooperation at all levels, both within the United Nations and with other international actors.

46. Norway's project on integrated missions had demonstrated that more authority should be delegated to the field, so as to enable the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to facilitate speedier implementation of plans; in addition, further reform of the current administrative and procedural arrangements was required for effective delivery.

47. Her Government was providing financial support to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in order to stimulate the development of a system-wide

approach to security sector reform. National reform of security structures was key to lasting peace and, as such, should be part of the exit strategy of all United Nations operations. Norway was also spearheading the development of joint mission analysis centres, which contributed significantly to the security of civilians and United Nations personnel by increasing situational awareness.

48. As United Nations peacekeeping missions were operating in increasingly complex environments, there was an ever greater need for high-quality personnel and equipment. She expressed concern at some host countries' attempts to impose geographical or other caveats on participation, a practice that restricted the possibility of selecting the most capable candidates and undermined the principle of universality. In keeping with that principle, women should not only be involved in the formulation of the mandates for peacekeeping operations but also in their implementation, including through the deployment of more uniformed female personnel.

49. Her delegation also welcomed the strengthening of the Office of Military Affairs, noting the need to continue reforming the peacekeeping apparatus to respond to the ever-increasing burden of operations and to continue attracting high-quality personnel. However, it was not enough to have high-quality personnel and equipment; as the situation in Darfur, Chad and the Central African Republic demonstrated, mandates must be linked to credible political processes.

50. She commended the European Union for providing military support for the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for its decision to escort ships carrying supplies for the World Food Programme in Somalia, a country whose population depended heavily on food assistance. The African Union's current involvement in Somalia underscored the need to clarify what kind of support the international community could provide for African Union operations established under a United Nations mandate. Her Government remained committed to the development of African peacekeeping capacities, having trained 400 police officers for UNAMID.

51. **Mr. Hoang Chi Trung** (Viet Nam) lauded the contributions of peacekeeping operations to the maintenance of international peace and security over the previous 60 years. Peacekeeping had continued to evolve over the years to address the challenges arising from a variety of conflicts and political realities. The increasing complexity and protracted nature of conflicts had led to an abrupt surge in demand for peacekeeping in recent years, overextending the capacity of the Organization.

52. His delegation believed that the success of peacekeeping operations would continue to depend upon the strict observance of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, particularly with regard to sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. It was of paramount importance to establish and conduct peacekeeping operations on the basis of the consent of the concerned parties, impartiality and the non-use of force except in self-defence. Moreover, operations should be accompanied by inclusive peace processes and provided with clearly defined and achievable mandates, command structures, adequate resources and exit strategies.

53. The Committee should conduct in-depth analyses of the two major issues currently faced by United Nations peacekeeping activities, namely, sexual misconduct by peacekeepers and inadequately funded mandates with a view to formulating corrective measures. In that connection, he welcomed the restructuring of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the establishment of the Department of Field Support. In the efforts aimed at improving the Organization's management of peacekeeping operations, equal attention should be given to the importance of unity of command, lines of accountability, integration of efforts and the safety and security of peacekeepers. Comprehensive measures must also be taken to address the issue of safety and security of peacekeepers and associated personnel. His delegation fully supported the activities undertaken to implement the zero-tolerance policy regarding acts of misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse, by all categories of United Nations personnel and called for further action to be taken in that regard.

54. **Ms. Aitimova** (Kazakhstan), paying tribute to all peacekeepers as the international community commemorated 60 years of United Nations peacekeeping, said that the Organization was the most effective tool for preventing crises and ensuring

regional and global stability. Recent crises in Africa and the situation in Afghanistan, Iraq and Darfur demonstrated the need to strengthen the authority of the United Nations and its Security Council with respect to the maintenance of international peace and security. To that end, the Organization's peacekeeping capacity should be further improved. However, operations must continue to be based strictly on the Charter and on such fundamental peacekeeping principles as the consent of the parties involved and the non-use of force except in self-defence, hence the importance of further developing the Capstone Doctrine, which set forth clear guidelines for peacekeeping activities. Her delegation fully supported efforts to strengthen the capacity of United Nations peacekeeping.

55. In order to strengthen missions operating in crisis situations and prevent the spread of destructive conflicts worldwide, a rapidly deployable United Nations strategic reserve force should be established. Furthermore, the inclusion of new members in the United Nations Standby Arrangements System should be considered and a close partnership should be promoted with relevant regional and intergovernmental organizations. She reiterated Kazakhstan's readiness to make the personnel and equipment of its peacekeeping brigade available for peacekeeping operations. Her Government fulfilled its financial obligations to the Organization in a timely manner and contributed regularly to its peacekeeping budgets, supported the Peace Operations 2010 reform agenda and welcomed the progress made in restructuring United Nations peacekeeping capacities. Lastly, she endorsed the recommendations and conclusions set forth in the reports of the Secretary-General.

56. **Mr. Álvarez** (Uruguay), reiterating his country's long-standing commitment to the maintenance of peace and security through peacekeeping operations, said that Uruguay would continue to participate in and support such operations in accordance, inter alia, with the guidelines set forth in the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (Brahimi report, S/2000/809 thus cited in several 3rd and 4th Committee SRs from 2000, e.g., A/C.4/55/SR.21) and deepening consultations between the Security Council and troop-contributing countries. In that context, Uruguay condemned sexual misconduct and abuse by peacekeepers and favoured efforts to ensure their safety and security.

57. Latin American countries had played a crucial leadership role in MINUSTAH, an operation that had undertaken post-conflict reconstruction and humanitarian activities in addition to security-related ones. In that context, he welcomed Security Council resolution 1840 (2008), which had renewed the Mission's mandate, and called upon the international community to continue its support of MINUSTAH.

58. Recent experiences had shown that after peace had been achieved it had to be consolidated in order to prevent conflict-affected countries from relapsing into conflict. Additional measures needed to consolidate peace included promoting economic and social development, fostering political stability and respect for the rule of law, rebuilding infrastructure and strengthening institutions. Such a difficult task could only be achieved by adopting a comprehensive and coordinated approach; in that connection, he lauded the activities undertaken by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in cooperation with the Department of Field Support and the Department of Political Affairs.

59. The experiences amassed by Latin American countries, including his own, in peacebuilding and reconstruction in conflict-affected areas could contribute to international efforts to build stable, democratic and prosperous societies capable of resolving internal conflicts.

60. **Mr. Valero** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that while his Government recognized the contribution of United Nations peacekeeping operations to a safer and more stable world, such operations had in recent years, gone beyond their mandate taking on the reconstruction of war-ravaged countries, which fell under the purview of local authorities. After 60 years of peacekeeping operations, there was an unprecedented number of active operations deployed around the world; however, the Organization's reputation had been tarnished by complaints of sexual abuse and exploitation committed by peacekeeping personnel. His Government fully supported the zero-tolerance policy on such abuse. Peacekeeping operations should strictly comply with the Charter of the United Nations and be governed by the principles of impartiality, non-interference in the internal affairs of States, the non-use of force except in self-defence, and require the consent of the parties involved as a prerequisite for deployment. The sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States were also to be respected in all

cases. At the fourteenth Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau, of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs had stressed that the establishment or expansion of peacekeeping operations must be governed by those principles. Although during the negotiations on General Assembly resolution 61/279 his delegation had expressed concern over the impact that the establishment of the Department of Field Support would have on the principle of unity of command in peacekeeping operations, it had, in a spirit of compromise, decided to support the resolution.

61. Closer cooperation between troop-contributing countries, the Security Council and the Secretariat was needed in order to make peacekeeping operations more effective and efficient. At the Fifteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, foreign ministers had reiterated their unwavering position on the fundamental principles that governed United Nations peacekeeping operations.

62. **Mr. McCurry** (United States of America) said that his delegation supported strong, well-managed and efficient peacekeeping operations. They offered a credible international response to crisis, and that need continued to grow. He was pleased to note that substantial progress had been made on a wide range of issues over the past year. The United States would continue to monitor implementation of the Secretary-General's 2007 proposals to restructure the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and looked forward to seeing the relevant vacancies filled, including in the Department's Office of Military Affairs and in the Department of Field Support. Discussions on how best to staff and manage the Police Division of the Office of the Rule of Law and Security Institutions in order to respond to the increased demands were welcome; the Secretary-General's forthcoming recommendations would be given detailed attention. It was to be hoped that the recommendations would be prioritized and that the most critical functions would be highlighted.

63. The United States supported the requirements identified in early 2008 by the Police Division, namely: the development of formed police unit policy and operations concepts; the secondment of police advisers to New York; funding to develop police doctrine; training manuals and unit readiness standards; materiel for formed police units; and the establishment of an association for international policing. The review of the Police Division should also include an examination of its capacity for managing the recruitment, selection and deployment of United Nations police. His delegation had concerns regarding the Division's current ability to adequately respond to the recent expansion in the number and roles of formed police units authorized for various missions, but was encouraged by the leadership shown by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in establishing a process for developing formed police unit doctrine.

64. Since it seemed that personnel in the field often had insufficient guidance on protecting civilians in armed conflict, the Department should develop specific guidance and doctrine as a matter of priority.

65. The United States continued to support efforts to ensure that 60 per cent of UNAMID was deployed by the end of the year, including the timely issuance of visas to peacekeepers. His delegation noted increasing efforts to protect humanitarian shipments to Somalia from pirates and looked forward to the Secretary-General's recommendations on possible multinational and peacekeeping approaches to that emergency.

66. While considerable progress had been made on the Organization's side in addressing all aspects of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, reports of such abuses continued. All troop- and police-contributing countries should thus make clear to their contingents that they expected the highest standard of conduct, in particular towards the vulnerable populations the United Nations was deployed to serve, and persons guilty of improper or criminal behaviour should be disciplined. Implementation of a true zero-tolerance policy was the only acceptable solution and constant vigilance was needed on the part of Member States to ensure that the United Nations maintained high standards, effective practices and unquestioned integrity.

67. **Mr. Habib** (Lebanon), noting the increasing number of peacekeeping operations, said that Member States should continue to provide the Organization with the assistance and support it needed in order to maintain international peace and security. Increased communication and coordination between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support were required in order for peacekeepers to perform their duties at the highest level.

68. Security sector reform was an important aspect of complex peacekeeping operations. The creation of a professional and accountable security sector was a

crucial element in the transition from peacekeeping to sustainable peace and development. In that connection, the relationship between the United Nations and host countries should be based on respect for the sovereignty of States and reflect national priorities.

69. The speedy deployment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in response to the Israeli aggression against Lebanon in 1978 was a shining example of international collaboration in peacekeeping and of what could be achieved through close cooperation between peacekeeping forces and their host countries. Thanks to that cooperation, UNIFIL troops had become an integral part of the communities in which they were deployed. Over the past 30 years, UNIFIL and his Government had worked hard to bring calm and stability to the south of Lebanon. Israel, on the other hand, had continued its assault on peace, going so far as to attack innocent civilians who had taken shelter in the UNIFIL compound in Qana. It had not lived up to its obligations under Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) and continued to undermine the quest for peace by refusing to cooperate with UNIFIL and impeding the demarcation of the Blue Line. In addition, Israel had continued its almost daily violations of Lebanese airspace.

70. In spite of repeated entreaties, Israel had refused to provide UNIFIL with information regarding locations on which it had dropped millions of cluster bombs during its aggression against Lebanon in 2006. Those bombs had killed hundreds of Lebanese civilians as well as a number of international workers and UNIFIL troops. In that connection, it was incumbent on Member States to cooperate fully in order to ensure the safety of peacekeepers. Lastly, Israel continued to occupy Lebanese territory and to threaten the civilian population of southern Lebanon. His Government therefore called on Member States to live up to their responsibility of maintaining regional stability and to demand that Israel should comply with all relevant resolutions and the ceasefire.

71. **Mr. Amil** (Pakistan) said that Pakistan was a leading and consistent contributor of military and police personnel, currently accounting for 12 per cent of United Nations peacekeeping deployments. It also contributed actively to relevant policy discussion at Headquarters. Peacekeeping had brought hope to millions of people afflicted by conflict. Notable successes in recent years had raised expectations and increased demand, while crises had become more complex and challenging. Member States had a collective responsibility to ensure that the United Nations was able to respond rapidly and effectively on a range of key issues. Peacekeeping must also be adapted to changing requirements, with a strengthening of capacities both in the field and at Headquarters. It was vital to ensure that the recent restructuring resulted in greater efficiency and effectiveness.

72. Since any deviation from the basic principles of peacekeeping would jeopardize the success of operations, they must not be confused with those led by non-United Nations entities. Unified command and control must be ensured across the board. It was also vital to demonstrate that United Nations peacekeeping could also deliver in inter-State conflicts that endangered international peace and security. The poor track record in that regard must be reversed.

73. Complex crises required a comprehensive approach that addressed the root causes of conflicts and prevented relapse. A genuine interface between peacekeeping and peacebuilding was essential to formulating correct exit strategies and laying foundations for sustainable peace and development. Missions should be clear, realistic and informed by realities on the ground. If based on political expediencies or cost considerations, they would lead to failure and erode the credibility of the Organization. To ensure the safety and security of personnel, adequate resources must be made available from the outset and sustained at every stage. Well-resourced missions were also better able to ensure proper conduct and discipline. An agreement must also be reached on a credible and feasible rapid deployment capacity.

74. True partnership should be promoted between the Secretariat, Security Council and troop-contributing countries, with the latter adequately represented in decision-making positions both in the field and at Headquarters. If that long-standing issue was not addressed, their continued support could not be ensured. Pursuant to Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, cooperation in peacekeeping operations with regional and subregional organizations should be explored, in order to make use of comparative advantages, expertise and resources. Primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security must, however, rest with the United Nations.

75. Pakistan supported enhanced cooperation with the African Union and a strengthening of peacekeeping capacity in Africa. The success or failure of peacekeeping operations depended on the support and commitment of Member States, hence the importance of undertaking peacekeeping actions collectively and in full respect of the Charter. Lack of political will must not, however, prevent the Organization from extending support where it was most needed, as in Somalia.

76. **Mr. Rabiu** (Nigeria) said that his country was the fourth largest contributor of troops and had never hesitated to respond unconditionally to demands for sacrifices, whether in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Liberia or the Sudan. The challenges in Darfur were enormous, but the United Nations could not afford to fail there. Resolute steps must be taken to ensure that UNAMID was fully deployed. The Government of the Sudan, for its part, should urgently facilitate that objective.

77. Like all troop-contributing countries, Nigeria was concerned about the safety and security of its peacekeepers wherever they were deployed. The recent killing of two Nigerian peacekeepers in Darfur must not go unpunished. Reliable operational and tactical intelligence was needed to pre-empt potential threats and ensure the safety and security both of peacekeepers and civilians. The Organization must also do more to bring troop numbers to agreed levels. A universally acceptable and uniform standard of compensation for those wounded or killed in action should also be devised.

78. In its quest for global peace and security, the international community must make full use of preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and strategies for global socio-economic development. Peacekeeping operations must have clearly defined mandates with unified command and control structures and be carried out in accordance with established principles. The prompt reimbursement of troop and equipment costs would greatly encourage Member States to contribute to operations.

79. Nigeria had been training its personnel in support of the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. Sustained consultations with troop-contributing countries at all stages were critical to the success of peacekeeping operations. The underrepresentation at senior management level of developing countries, particularly troop contributors, was a matter of deep concern, both at Headquarters and in the field. The lopsided staff structure should be reviewed and recruitment approached on a more egalitarian regional basis, through Galaxy.

80. **Mr. Choisuren** (Mongolia) said that peacekeeping faced unprecedented challenges which called for better planning, execution and coordination at all levels. Operations must be given substantial political support and provided with sufficient financial and human resources from the outset. The recommendations of the Brahimi report (S/2000/809) should also be fully implemented. Work on the "capstone doctrine" to guide peacekeeping missions must be accelerated, covering all stages, from predeployment to post-conflict peacebuilding.

81. Mongolia welcomed the restructuring under way, but, like other speakers, stressed that it must preserve unity of command and clear command structures and ensure effective cooperation between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support. The establishment of integrated operational teams was a welcome development.

82. Attacks against United Nations personnel and property must be condemned. The security of all personnel was of the utmost importance and host countries and fighting parties had a primary responsibility in that regard. Risk assessment procedures and information-gathering and information-dissemination capacities should be enhanced, with troop-contributing countries involved at all stages.

83. Mongolia also reiterated its commitment to the zero-tolerance policy. New memorandums of understanding should also be developed as a matter of urgency, given the importance of deploying properly trained personnel. He wished to draw the Committee's attention to the exemplary Five Hills Training facility in Mongolia, which had been used for regional training activities.

84. **Mr. Buff** (Observer for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) said that the protection of people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence was at the heart of the mandate of ICRC. Civilians were often directly targeted as part of a blatant strategy, and protection fell short, owing not to an inadequate legal framework, but to failures to comply with international humanitarian law.

85. With protection needs now far exceeding the capacity of any one actor, ICRC welcomed the recent enhancement of response efforts. Indeed, an increase in actors called for effective coordination that took different mandates and approaches into account. The constructive interaction established between ICRC and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, notably in the area of international humanitarian law promotion, was especially important since ICRC and United Nations peacekeepers increasingly coexisted in many operating environments. ICRC had a clear protection mandate given to it by States, while Security Council resolution 1674 (2006) suggested that peacekeeping, political and peacebuilding missions might, in certain cases, be mandated to protect civilians. Although both United Nations forces and ICRC endeavoured to protect civilians, their mandates, roles and approaches were distinct. ICRC, for its part, had a strictly humanitarian mission, which could not be blurred with any military, political or economic dimensions. It relied on proximity with people at risk and direct dialogue with all parties in a conflict. Establishing relationships with non-State actors was often an arduous and sensitive undertaking which risked being compromised if doubts arose with respect to the independence, neutrality, or purely humanitarian intentions of ICRC. Humanitarian efforts, political action, legal measures and physical protection were distinct aspects of a complementary protection response, each requiring different competencies and approaches. The latter should not be fused nor confused, nor need they result in duplication. Humanitarian work must be seen to be free of political or other associated interests, else humanitarian efforts would be severely undermined, putting civilians and humanitarian workers at even greater risk. ICRC and the United Nations had a common interest in defining an effective interface between their distinct — but complementary — approaches to protecting civilians.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.

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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 28 October 2008, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Argüello ..... (Argentina)
later: Mr. Elsherbini (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Egypt)

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08-57236 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 31: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Urbina** (Costa Rica) observed that the growing number of peacekeeping operations had become far more complex and challenging: they now aimed not only to restore peace and security but also to deal with issues ranging from disarmament to governance and development. That was why Costa Rica advocated integrated missions that, in its view, would be cost-effective and would smooth the transition from conflict to post-conflict reconstruction and development. At the same time, of course, the special representative of the Secretary-General for each mission would have to be given more authority. Mandates should also reflect the available resources and the wishes of the parties involved — otherwise the United Nations would do no more than provide a buffer between two warring parties, maintaining the status quo without resolving the conflict or promoting peace and development.

2. If missions were to succeed, there should also be sustained, timely interaction and exchange of information between the troop-contributing countries, the Security Council and the Secretariat, and that should be done before any decisions were taken. Furthermore, although it was universally agreed that the protection of civilians was a basic goal, there was no clear understanding of what exactly that responsibility entailed, especially in multidimensional operations. The Security Council mandates should clearly specify what was expected.

3. Instances of misconduct by a few peacekeepers were still taking place and as a matter of policy, they could not be tolerated. The Organization was, moreover, being too slow in putting into effect the agreed strategy on assistance and support to the victims of such abuse.

4. **Mr. Natchiappan** (India) welcomed the strengthening and rationalization of peacekeeping structures. It remained essential to ensure clear command structures, coherence in policy and strategy, effective coordination and integration, as well as unity of command from Headquarters to the field. Utmost priority should be given to enhancing the safety and security of field personnel, including through enhanced information gathering and sharing. Troop-contributing countries should be involved early and fully in all aspects of mission planning; consultations on the eve of mandate renewal left little scope for meaningful discussions.

5. India had participated in most major peacekeeping operations in Africa and had supported efforts to enhance African peacekeeping capacity. The real challenge before the United Nations was to strengthen peacekeeping without regionalizing it. The maintenance of international peace and security was the responsibility of the United Nations and cooperation with regional organizations should remain in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations.

6. India was fully committed to the zero-tolerance policy in respect of sexual exploitation and abuse and would take action to prosecute where appropriate. The Integrated Training Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should put the experience of major troop-contributing countries to good use in training programmes, which were urgently needed.

7. His delegation supported a holistic and coherent approach to security sector reform. There must be improved coordination, avoidance of duplication and a sense of national ownership. As the Police Division expanded to reflect the increased role of police in peacekeeping operations, it was important to ensure that troop-contributing countries were adequately represented in senior management positions.

8. The issue of reimbursement of troop-contributing countries should also be addressed and the selective financing of operations avoided. In response to the Secretary-General's call for increased representation of female personnel in field missions, India was proud to have provided the first fully female formed police unit, deployed for the past two years in Liberia. The unit had proved successful in reaching out to women and children in a post-conflict environment, in addition to performing its normal duties.

9. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt) observed that the growing number and complexity of peacekeeping operations was reflected in an increase of the peacekeeping budget to around $7 billion a year. Since the Organization's entire regular budget for the biennium was only $4.2 billion, it could not be expected to ensure the timely provision of the troops and equipment needed to maintain international peace and security. The

substantial difference between the two budgets was a matter of concern. It revealed an emphasis on conflict management rather than conflict settlement, which undermined the basic principles of peacekeeping and exhausted a budget that would better serve development objectives. The global financial crisis should, rather, motivate the international community to exploit existing mandates and available resources more advantageously and to concentrate on resolving disputes by peaceful means. He was concerned that any expansion of peacekeeping operations or restructuring should be consistent with the basic principles of peacekeeping and ensure linkages with existing peace agreements and processes. There must also be a peace to keep in the first place, as well as an effective, balanced partnership between international stakeholders, with the consent of governments concerned. Peacekeeping must be part of the solution, not a peace-enforcement operation that led the United Nations into confrontation with States concerned.

10. The growth in number of operations reflected a continued demand for peacekeeping on the part of the international community, as well as its trust in the Organization. However, his delegation wished to highlight the primary role of the General Assembly in formulating and deciding on concepts, policies and budgetary matters relating to peacekeeping. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations was the only United Nations entity mandated to undertake a comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects.

11. Coordination between the Security Council and troop-contributing countries must be strengthened to ensure that their expertise was utilized whenever new operations were established or their enlargement, reduction or termination considered. Effective consultations were also needed between troop contributors, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support. Unity of command must also be ensured, as must coherence of strategies between the two Departments. The safety and security of United Nations personnel was best achieved with a well-planned mission deployed on the basis of a comprehensive political process.

12. It was also vital to ensure transparency with respect to procurement contracts; give priority to regional and national companies; and avoid sole source contracts with large companies that led to logistical complications.

13. His delegation supported the zero-tolerance policy on acts of sexual exploitation and abuse, which must be implemented in a transparent manner by the Secretariat and in consultation with the governments concerned. A culture of peacekeeping should also be disseminated and regular meetings held at the expert level to discuss the evolution in peacekeeping concepts and practices on the ground.

14. United Nations efforts to strengthen African peacekeeping capabilities and consolidate regional efforts to that end were welcome. However, regional operations must not substitute the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, which rested with the United Nations. Egypt was concerned by the Secretariat's signing of a cooperation agreement with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), in view of the military nature of NATO and different interpretations regarding its categorization under Chapter VIII of the Charter. The Security Council's indirect authorization to such entities to carry out tasks falling within the Organization's competence was also a matter of concern. Both had been undertaken without prior consultation of Member States.

15. **Mr. Al-Otmi** (Yemen) said that, in keeping with its belief that peacekeeping was a collective responsibility, his country had contributed elements to 10 peacekeeping operations. He called on the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to allow more countries to participate in its operations in order to ensure equitable geographical representation.

16. Peacekeeping was not a permanent solution to conflicts and not a substitute for addressing their root causes. Least developed countries required technical and economic assistance in order to lift them out of poverty and repair their tattered social fabric. In that connection, the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund were important steps in the reform of the United Nations and required the support of the entire international community.

17. While preventive diplomacy was vital to conflict resolution, the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States must also be respected. The global food, energy and financial crises, as well as climate change, posed grave threats to international peace and security and required urgent action.

18. He strongly condemned attacks on, and the killing of, United Nations personnel and called for increased protection for peacekeepers. He also supported the Organization's zero-tolerance policy in respect of sexual exploitation and abuse and stressed that all allegations of such misconduct should be investigated.

19. **Mr. Ayi-Bonte** (Ghana) said that, contrary to expectations following the end of the Cold War, demand for United Nations peacekeeping operations had surged, stretching the Organization's capacities to the limits. The United Nations had not been daunted, resulting in the global recognition that it remained the only supranational organization with the capability to deploy, lead and sustain multidimensional peacekeeping operations. With no shortage of threats to global peace, demand for United Nations peacekeeping would continue to rise. The Organization's capabilities must thus be periodically reviewed in order to improve its preparedness and effectiveness, in the interests of ensuring peace and security for civilians and peacekeepers alike.

20. The reform process undertaken by the Secretariat was most welcome and should be continued; however, it was not an end in itself or a panacea for emerging frictions in peacekeeping operations. The ability of the United Nations to fulfil peacekeeping objectives depended also on the provision of realistic, viable and clearly defined mandates and adequate logistical support, as well as the timely deployment of peacekeepers, inter alia.

21. Although mission fatalities had declined over the years, the recent tragic incident in Darfur had renewed Ghana's concerns over the security and safety of peacekeepers. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations should be commended for its efforts to address security gaps at missions and be encouraged to explore new options.

22. Given the current strain on United Nations peacekeeping, cooperation with regional arrangements was vital; however, the Department should consider establishing frameworks to replace existing ad hoc cooperation arrangements with such entities. Efforts to strengthen African peacekeeping capabilities were welcome; the international community should provide the requisite assistance to strengthen rapid deployment capabilities in that connection. Current gaps in the Police Division must also be addressed. Appropriate measures should also be taken to further full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

23. *Mr. Elsherbini (Egypt), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

24. **Mr. Nhleko** (Swaziland) observed that there was no single model for multidimensional peacekeeping operations and that each mission should take into account the needs and dynamics of the country concerned. His delegation paid tribute to the professionalism, dedication and courage of United Nations peacekeepers, particularly those who had given their lives for the maintenance of peace and security.

25. In the interests of strengthening African peacekeeping, logistical and financial support should be provided for the rapid deployment capabilities of the African Union and the Joint Action Plan agreed between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the African Union should focus on cooperation in conflict prevention as well as peacekeeping and in particular on development of the African Standby Force, to which his Government had already contributed a battalion. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support should devise programmes that would further the overall objectives of the African Standby Force and at the same time contribute to sustainable development in African developing countries. The Department should continue to help the African Union to develop common procedures in its joint planning and coordination with subregional communities.

26. The United Nations should continue to follow a policy of zero tolerance with respect to sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeepers, so as to eliminate all such misconduct. His delegation welcomed the adoption in resolution 62/214 of a comprehensive strategy on assistance and support to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.

27. **Mr. Zongo** (Burkina Faso) observed that the essential mission of peacekeeping operations was to protect civilians living in the midst of conflict. The United Nations principles of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity were particularly relevant during the planning phases of peacekeeping operations; and the memorandums of agreement should also take into account the views of the host countries and the troop-contributing countries. More clearly defined

command structures and predictable funding would certainly make for a more efficient response to requests for peacekeeping. The United Nations must enter into partnerships with regional and subregional organizations, which had a better knowledge of the socio-political and cultural conditions in their areas.

28. The nature of conflicts had evolved to the point that most now were internal disputes, and consequently peacekeeping operations should plan their interventions in cooperation with regional and subregional organizations. The experience and specialized knowledge of troop-contributing countries could also be particularly useful. When taking a carefully planned preventive approach, the United Nations should examine the root causes of the crisis in question, which included poverty, bad governance, injustice or inequality. That was particularly true for Africa, unfortunately the scene of many crises. It was therefore important to support the African Union as it sought to resolve the conflicts on the continent, particularly by providing it with financial resources. Also, since there were many countries that would want to take part in a costly peacekeeping operation like the one in Darfur but lacked the necessary means, the United Nations should establish links of solidarity that would allow a greater participation by less wealthy States. Burkina Faso, which had taken part in peacekeeping operations since 1993, was intending despite its modest means to join the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

29. In its peacekeeping work, the Organization must present a more positive and honourable image and the Secretary-General and all parties concerned must maintain the zero-tolerance policy for any misconduct by peacekeepers. In the interests, again, of credibility, the Organization must provide security and protection to civilians in all countries without exception, and approach all crises with the same determination and commitment. The Somali people had been waiting too long for action on the part of the United Nations and needed reassurance in that regard.

30. The security and safety of peacekeepers working with such dedication under extremely difficult situations and often even sacrificing their lives, must be ensured. Also, the operational capacity of the peacekeepers in the field was crucial, and the Secretary-General must raise the standards of the training programmes provided and help to organize local training centres such as those in Ghana and in Mali.

31. **Ms. Kamto** (Cameroon) said that there were certain guiding principles underlying the success of peacekeeping operations. First among them were respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of States, non-interference in their domestic affairs, and close cooperation between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the troop-contributing countries. Secondly, since the aim was to consolidate peace and prevent the resumption of hostilities, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants was an essential component of any peacekeeping operation. Thirdly, the costs of peacekeeping operations were a particular burden for the developing countries, and therefore it was extremely important for them to be reimbursed quickly for any troop-contributing expenses.

32. The broader and more complex missions that were now the norm obviously created the need for a new training strategy and more extensive training of peacekeeping personnel, now to be provided by the Integrated Training Service established at the United Nations Logistics Base. Cameroon itself, aware of how crucial proper training was, and wanting to diversify its contribution to peacekeeping and strengthen its cooperation with the United Nations and the African Union, had set up the International School for Security Forces, which — with the invaluable aid of bilateral and multilateral partners — had expanded from a training school for Cameroonian peacekeeping contingents to a regional centre for training police contingents from other African States in the subregion, thus improving the peacekeeping capabilities of any such State wishing to have its forces attend the School.

33. Cameroon was closely following the functioning of the newly restructured Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the new Department of Field Support, as they worked as closely as possible together to apply the six key principles of the restructuring programme, namely, ensuring unity of command, giving priority to field missions, clearly defining reporting and communication obligations, avoiding unnecessarily complicated restructuring, integrating their efforts and ensuring consistent strategies and policies. Cameroon looked forward to the comprehensive report to be issued by the Secretary-General on the restructuring programme.

34. Her country had over the years actively participated in peacekeeping operations in Cambodia, Kosovo, Haiti, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Darfur and the Central African Republic. Most recently, Cameroon had begun working with the European-led peacekeeping force (EUFOR) on the border between Chad, the Central African Republic and the Sudan, by allowing Cameroonian territory to be used as a transit area for the mission's materiel and personnel.

35. *Mr. Argüello (Argentina) resumed the Chair.*

36. **Mr. Kebret** (Ethiopia) observed that peacekeeping operations were venturing into uncharted territory that presented the United Nations with sensitive, dangerous and complex challenges with which it had not yet fully dealt. The ongoing reform of the machinery of peacekeeping, accordingly, needed to be vigorously pursued in order to ensure more focused, professional and sustainable operations.

37. Peacekeepers faced risks on a daily basis, and deserve the highest tribute for serving with dedication under harsh conditions. In recent years attacks on them had started to become routine, and Ethiopia condemned such senseless and savage attacks in the strongest possible terms. The safety of the peacekeepers was inseparable from the achievement of the objectives of peacekeeping. The United Nations must give priority to devising a way of creating a safe working environment for its peacekeepers.

38. One of the areas where peacekeepers were under constant attack was Somalia, and the operations of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) were severely hampered by terrorist forces seeking to prevent political reconciliation and stability in the country. The anguish of the people of Somalia, by any fair standard, was no less than that of other peoples in similar situations, yet the international community's uneven response to the situation in Somalia was baffling. It was high time that the United Nations provided logistical and other support for the valiant Ugandan and Burundian peacekeepers in AMISOM; consideration should also be given to transforming that mission into a United Nations peacekeeping mission. Africa expected swift, concerted action on Somalia. In such a desperate situation, the United Nations must not wait until the traditional conditions for the deployment of a peacekeeping mission existed; it must act before it was too late to bring under control a crisis that could seriously destabilize the subregion and the entire region.

39. The African Union's peacekeeping strategy placed primary responsibility on African governments and their people, while working in partnership with the United Nations and other international organizations. The Organization's support was vital to building the peacekeeping capacities of African regional organizations and the African Union, in order to make the continent an effective partner in global peacemaking efforts.

40. Ethiopia itself had participated actively in United Nations peacekeeping operations for over half a century, as part of its responsibility as a founding member of the United Nations. Its troops, military observers and civilians were currently serving in Liberia and Darfur.

41. **Mr. Leong** (Malaysia) said that despite the increasingly multidimensional character of United Nations peacekeeping operations, they should remain consistent with their mandates and with relevant agreed principles and guidelines. However, the Organization's ability to fulfil its responsibilities in the area of peacekeeping was only as good as the commitment of Member States, which must provide unwavering support, especially in the area of human and financial resources and logistics to ensure the timely and successful implementation of peacekeeping operations.

42. Malaysia had participated in more than 20 peacekeeping missions since 1960, and was currently contributing a total of 483 military and 269 police personnel in eight missions. Referring to the restructuring of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, he said that the Department must continue to create and refine synergies within the United Nations system; provide information on mission developments to troop-contributing countries on a priority basis, especially those whose personnel were involved on the ground; preserve and ensure unity of command at all levels; and ensure geographical balance in personnel and troop contributions while maintaining high personnel quality.

43. His delegation shared the concern of the Secretary-General regarding cases of sexual misconduct by peacekeepers, and was committed to the zero-tolerance policy in respect of sexual exploitation and abuse; those responsible for such misconduct must be subject to disciplinary or criminal action. Personnel

selected for peacekeeping missions must be reliable, so as not to tarnish the reputation of United Nations peacekeeping operations. Malaysia would work with other Member States to ensure the implementation of the recommendations of the Special Committee in that regard. However, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations must provide fuller and more timely information on incidents involving peacekeepers.

44. Noting the 93 fatalities to date among peacekeepers in 2008, he expressed concern at the increasing threat to United Nations peacekeeping personnel serving in conflict areas and vigorously condemned all acts of violence against them. Indeed, the perpetrators of such acts must be held accountable and the Department should also carry out a thorough investigation into the attacks in order to foster better preparedness and reduce casualties.

45. **Mr. Hosseini** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that all peacekeeping operations must be carried out with the authorization of the United Nations and under its leadership, command and control. Impartiality, the consent of the parties concerned, and the non-use of force except in self-defence should serve as the guiding principles of United Nations peacekeeping operations. Unilateral acts taken outside the purview of the United Nations were not consistent with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and must not only be ended but prevented from recurring in the future. In addition to strictly observing the aforementioned principles, however, United Nations peacekeeping operations should also enjoy the full political support of the Member States, precisely assess human, financial and logistical resources and have clearly defined and achievable mandates and exit strategies.

46. While any new concepts and ideas developed to address the increasingly complex and multidimensional nature of peacekeeping operations should be consistent with the principles, guidelines and terminology agreed upon during the relevant intergovernmental negotiating processes, the General Assembly remained the organ with primary responsibility for reviewing the political, legal and financial impact of such concepts and ideas.

47. The United Nations should adopt a zero-tolerance policy with respect to any misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse, by all United Nations personnel; no perpetrator of such misconduct should enjoy impunity, although due process must be followed in any relevant investigations. Security sector reform must be integrated into the framework of United Nations rule of law activities and the development of a United Nations approach to such reform must take place within the General Assembly; the formulation of reform strategies should be carried out through the intergovernmental process.

48. The contribution of regional arrangements as provided for under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations should not absolve the United Nations of its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security; the Secretariat should ensure that troop-contributing countries were properly represented in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support at all levels at Headquarters and in the field.

49. **Mr. Sim** Tiong Kian (Singapore) said that in view of the uphill struggle faced by United Nations peacekeeping, he welcomed the stated intention of the two Under-Secretaries-General to stay the course on the reform agenda. The organizational restructuring undertaken so far had been a good start, but its objectives were yet to be fulfilled. His delegation therefore looked forward to the Secretary-General's review of that exercise. It would like to know whether the integrated operational teams concept was working; whether the Department of Peacekeeping Operations' crisis monitoring, analysis and response capabilities had improved; and whether the benefits of the restructuring outweighed the costs in the form of additional resources needed to maintain unity of command as well as increased bureaucratic delays.

50. With regard to resources, he urged the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to continue working with the Department of Political Affairs and the Peacebuilding Support Office to reduce the demands of existing missions where possible, and called on developed countries to contribute more peacekeepers or equipment.

51. He expressed his delegation's deep concern regarding the recruitment and retention difficulties being encountered by the Department of Field Support. While applauding that Department's efforts to improve the situation, he urged it to review the management system at Headquarters with a view to promoting good performers and replacing ineffectual ones while maintaining equal geographic representation. The Department could also consider a policy for

periodically rotating personnel between Headquarters and the field.

52. Given the crucial need for clear doctrines and guidelines, he welcomed the publication of the Capstone doctrine, and called for its translation by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations into useful guidelines and training modules, the absence of which in the past had led to confusion and tragic consequences in the field. Guidelines for the protection of the civilians should also be developed. He was disappointed to note, however, that recent meetings of the Special Committee had been marred by acrimony and the politicization of issues, a trend that risked undermining the relevance of the Special Committee.

53. Finally, as peacekeepers increasingly worked alongside civilian and humanitarian partners in the field, the rising trend of malicious and indiscriminate attacks against them by criminals and illegal armed elements was a growing concern. Such attacks stemmed in part from the public perception, according to the June 2008 report of the Independent Panel on Safety and Security of United Nations Personnel and Premises Worldwide, that the United Nations was not impartial and neutral. The report of the Independent Panel on Accountability related to the attack on the United Nations premises in Algiers in December 2007 had also indicated troubling failures in the administration of peacekeeping at the United Nations, including lack of supervision by senior managers, a dysfunctional relationship among key actors in the field, and shortcomings in recruitment and training. He urged the Department of Field Support to take appropriate measures to enhance the safety and security of peacekeepers and called on the Secretary-General to ensure accountability at all levels.

54. **Mr. Butagira** (Uganda) said that, while steady progress had been achieved over the past year in restructuring the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support, there was a need to ensure full compliance with General Assembly resolution 61/270 with regard to the personnel recruitment process, while bearing in mind the principles of transparency, equity and regional balance. Expressing his delegation's strong condemnation of recent continuing and frequently lethal attacks on United Nations peacekeepers, he requested the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support to work closely with the countries concerned to ensure the security of personnel in the field, promptly investigate the causes of incidents that occurred and inform the affected troop-contributing countries with a view to facilitating compensation wherever applicable. He called on the United Nations to expedite the deployment of peacekeepers to replace AMISOM.

55. **Ms. Harris** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that since the signing of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement on 4 March 2007, the social and political situation in her country had been returning to normal: hostilities between the warring forces had ended; the Zone of Confidence had been dismantled; and the freedom of movement of people and goods throughout the country had been restored. Recent Government-supported measures in the area of demobilization and reintegration of combatants had also been successful, and had culminated in the recognition by the Security Council that her country had put an end to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. She expressed her Government's gratitude to the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), the donor and troop-contributing countries, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), France, the international community, and all those who had directly or indirectly contributed to the peace process and the implementation of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement.

56. **Mr. del Rosario Ceballos** (Dominican Republic) welcomed the contribution of United Nations peacekeeping operations to the maintenance of international peace and security, and expressed confidence in the ability of peacekeeping personnel to face emerging challenges. However, the increase in the number and complexity of peacekeeping operations in recent years attested to the fact that not enough attention was being paid to conflict prevention and to the promotion of sustainable development; greater efforts should be made to prevent conflicts in order to reduce the number of peacekeeping missions.

57. He welcomed the recent extension of the mandate of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), one of the most concrete expressions of international assistance to Haiti. Securing the assistance promised to Haiti by donors had been a historically difficult endeavour, as evidenced by the recent High-Level Conference on World Food Security, which had yielded a mere $10 million — amounting to $1 per person — in emergency aid for the sister republic. The international donor community should

honour its pledges of assistance, so as to strengthen the role of MINUSTAH.

58. **Mr. Al-Mekrad** (Kuwait) said that there was a need to clearly define the objectives of peacekeeping forces in the context of humanitarian operations. Cooperation and consultation between troop-contributing countries and the Security Council throughout all phases of peacekeeping operations were also imperative, as was the provision of technical and financial support to peacekeeping forces. Moreover, the United Nations should play a more active role in conflict prevention.

59. He welcomed the support and cooperation that Member States had provided to the Organization as it sought to strengthen its peacekeeping capacities. His Government commended the United Nations for its role in maintaining boundary markers between Kuwait and Iraq, pursuant to Security Council resolution 833 (1993), and also welcomed Iraqi cooperation in that regard. Kuwait had implemented all the recommendations contained in the technical report by removing all obstacles and creating conditions conducive to the work of United Nations technical teams.

60. Although Kuwait's share of the peacekeeping budget had increased fivefold in recent years, it had continued to meet its obligations completely and in a timely fashion and hoped that all Member States would do likewise. He strongly condemned actions that threatened United Nations peacekeeping personnel and called for all possible measures to be taken to ensure their safety.

61. **Mr. Seakamela** (South Africa) said that his Government was currently contributing troops to United Nations peacekeeping operations on the African continent and elsewhere. In light of the unusually high demand for United Nations peacekeepers, who were called upon to serve in increasingly volatile and insecure environments, he welcomed the steps being taken by the Organization to accord the highest priority to the safety of its personnel in the field.

62. South Africa attached great importance to security sector reform as an instrument for building sustainable peace, security, democracy and development; such reform should be nationally owned and should address local realities. He encouraged the United Nations to continue developing a common approach in that regard.

63. In keeping with his Government's commitment to gender equality, he stressed the need for increased female participation in peacekeeping operations. He commended the Secretary-General's commitment to increase the number of women in leadership positions, and urged him to move rapidly towards meeting the target of female representation in peacekeeping.

64. He welcomed the Secretariat's support for the strengthening of African peacekeeping operations, especially those efforts aimed at developing and strengthening the African Union's capacity to develop a Joint Action Plan to address specific constraints identified by African Member States. He emphasized the need for closer cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, since such organizations were usually in a better position to intervene and had a better understanding of specific conflicts due to their proximity. For instance, initial African Union involvement had paved the way for deployment of United Nations peacekeeping forces in Burundi and in the Darfur region of the Sudan.

65. He welcomed the Organization's efforts to implement disciplinary procedures intended to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation by United Nations personnel. He also urged the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support to continue their efforts to address the current imbalance in geographic and gender representation among peacekeeping personnel in accordance with the Charter, Staff Regulations and Rules and relevant General Assembly resolutions. Such representation should also take into account the contributions by Member States.

66. **Mr. Kulima** (Zambia) said that his delegation condemned all acts of violence aimed at United Nations peacekeepers and called on the Organization to develop a robust policy to protect all categories of personnel. His Government was prepared to work with all concerned parties to ensure that any acts of misconduct, especially sexual exploitation and abuse, were rooted out of United Nations peacekeeping activities and duly punished. Such misconduct by peacekeeping personnel was unacceptable and had a detrimental effect on the fulfilment of mandates, tarnishing the image of troop-contributing countries and that of the Organization as a whole and eclipsing the positive contributions of United Nations peacekeeping.

67. As a troop- and police-contributing country, Zambia was concerned over the numerous delays in processing of death and disability claims it had submitted to the United Nations — a concern echoed in General Assembly resolution 61/276 — and called upon the Secretariat to simplify claims procedures so as to enable their prompt settlement.

68. **Mr. Nyowani** (Zimbabwe) said that the United Nations-African Union Joint Action Plan was vital to African peacekeeping capacities, and called for support for African efforts to establish a standby force capable of rapidly responding to and preventing conflict. Cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations should also be reinforced. Furthermore, troop-contributing countries should be fully involved in all stages of United Nations peacekeeping operations. More frequent and substantive interaction among those countries, the Security Council and the Secretariat would also contribute to a more inclusive decision-making process.

69. While his Government had endorsed the Secretary-General's proposal to restructure the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, it was of the view that the Department must take into account the interests of all parties, including respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and the promotion of national ownership.

70. Urgent consideration must be given to the issue of safety of peacekeeping personnel in light of the disturbing trend of deaths of peacekeepers in the line of duty. His delegation fully supported the zero-tolerance policy in respect of sexual exploitation and abuse, and called upon all troop- and police-contributing countries to take all necessary measures to eliminate those shameful acts of misconduct. Although progress had been made on the issue of female representation within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and in the field, more remained to be done.

71. Noting his country's long-standing contribution of troops and observers to United Nations peacekeeping operations, he expressed concern over the lack of transparency in the processing of compensation for officers and peacekeepers who perished while serving the United Nations.

72. **Ms. Ithete** (Namibia), noting that sustainable development could not be achieved without peace and stability, said that containing conflicts and instability had, to some extent, played a role in the underdevelopment of many countries, especially in Africa.

73. As a result of the increase in the number of conflicts, peacekeeping operations had become too expensive and complex to manage. While conflict resolution was important, the international community should place greater emphasis on conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts. In that connection, she urged the United Nations to continue to assist the African Union in enhancing its early warning capability, so as to enable it to maintain peace on the continent.

74. Having itself benefited from multilateral international efforts to maintain peace and security, Namibia had contributed troops and police to various United Nations and African Union peacekeeping operations. It had recently pledged a mechanized infantry battalion of 860 troops for UNAMID, along with individual police officers and military observers for the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS).

75. She reiterated her delegation's commitment to the zero-tolerance policy on all forms of misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse, committed by peacekeeping personnel; such misconduct constituted a betrayal of the very people United Nations peacekeeping operations were intended to protect. The importance of women's participation in peacekeeping operations lay not only in the need for gender balance but also in the unique contribution that women could make to the success of peacekeeping operations.

76. Peacekeeping operations must be conducted strictly in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. It was also important to improve cooperation among troop-contributing countries, the Security Council and the Secretariat, in the interest of a more inclusive decision-making process. The principle of equitable geographical distribution should be observed in recruiting personnel at Headquarters and in the field; the selection process for high-level posts should also be more transparent.

77. **Mr. Gallardo** (Peru), referring to Peru's long-standing participation in peacekeeping operations, said that such operations should be crafted in such a way as to allow ownership by the country concerned, whose institutions, capacity for conflict resolution and sovereignty should be strengthened. Given the growing role of regional and other international organizations in peacekeeping, a flexible, case-by-case approach to

operations would be required, without prejudice to the principles set forth in the Charter.

78. Since peace and security, development and human rights were interrelated, peacekeeping operations would have to address not just the immediate causes of conflict but also work towards creating conditions for sustainable peace. A more comprehensive approach which took all relevant criteria into account would prevent hasty troop reductions and withdrawals and lead to a more effective United Nations response. Indeed, Security Council resolution 1840 (2008), which renewed the mandate of MINUSTAH had affirmed the need for such a comprehensive approach. He reiterated his Government's support for Haiti through its participation in MINUSTAH; indeed, Peru and Argentina were working on plans to deploy a joint company of army engineers to Haiti.

79. In order for United Nations peacekeeping operations to be able to credibly fulfil their mandates, a shared political and strategic perception of the situation on the ground among the main actors would be necessary, along with forces with well-defined mandates placed at the Organization's disposal without any prior conditions. As far as the strengthening of operational capacity was concerned, it was essential, inter alia, to ensure a clear chain of command, effective planning and management, and security and safety of field personnel. Furthermore, strict discipline within peacekeeping operations was key, as was the need to ensure that troop-contributing countries duly punished any personnel involved in any misconduct, including sexual abuse and exploitation. Finally, he reiterated his Government's interest in working with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on its international capacity-building and training activities.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.

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Summary record of the 19th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 29 October 2008, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Argüello ..... (Argentina)
later: Mr. Cujba (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Republic of Moldova)
later: Mr. Argüello (Chairman) ..... (Argentina)

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08-57452 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 29: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
(A/63/13, A/63/269, A/63/315, A/63/317 and A/63/375)

1. **Ms. Koning AbuZayd** (Commissioner-General, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)), introducing the report for 2007 (A/63/13), noted that it gave particular attention to the twin crises in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in northern Lebanon that had seriously affected the Palestine refugees and, with them, UNRWA. The report described the substantial changes taking place both within the Agency and in its relationships with its stakeholders, aimed at improving its effectiveness as the largest provider of basic services to the Palestine refugees and integrating it more into the United Nations system.

2. Her Agency had faced many challenges over the decades, but no emergency had persisted as long as the current conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, now in its ninth year. The humanitarian crises that had beset Gaza and the West Bank in the past two years had dwarfed earlier calamities. Moreover, UNRWA had never had to cope with major crises in three fields of operation simultaneously, the third being Lebanon. The Nahr al-Barid refugee camp in Lebanon had been completely destroyed in weeks of fierce fighting, displacing a once-thriving refugee community of some 30,000 people that would need to be supported elsewhere for the next three years until the camp was rebuilt.

3. The intricate system of closure and other movement restrictions imposed by Israel on Gaza and the West Bank, with the aim of improving security for its own people, had had a devastating economic and human cost. According to the World Bank, had there not been restrictions and other punitive measures that had choked the economy of the occupied Territories, the Palestinian economy would probably have doubled in size between 2000 and 2007. Conditions were particularly wrenching in Gaza, where the Israeli blockade imposed following the takeover by Hamas in 2007 had severed access to the outside world, including access to medical care, higher education and numerous aspects of economic life. Ninety per cent of Gaza's small businesses had shut down in the past year and the unemployment rate, at close to 50 per cent, was among the highest in the world. The Israeli policy was beginning to scar indelibly Gaza's children, who made up over half of the population of 1.5 million.

4. Through its extensive emergency programmes, UNRWA was shouldering the major burden of providing humanitarian assistance in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: food aid to the destitute and to school children, short-term jobs for the jobless, mobile primary health-care clinics and much more, including a summer games programme for children that had provided a much-valued alternative at a time of deepening social conservatism and radicalization in Gaza. The Agency had improved the effectiveness of its emergency service delivery, in collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

5. The UNRWA emergency appeals had been relatively well-funded, although in 2007 only 57 per cent of the pledged amount had been received. While there had been a strong donor response to the appeals for the Nahr al-Barid crisis in Lebanon, the interim support programmes for the displaced population would have to begin to be cut back, unless new pledges were received. Moreover, the response to the appeal for reconstruction of the camp had been disappointing, and threatened to jeopardize the future of that crucial project.

6. The Agency's core services, delivered directly by its staff through its own facilities, were the cornerstone of its mandate. Highlighting some of the Agency's achievements, starting with the education programme, she said that nearly 500,000 pupils were enrolled in UNRWA schools. Primary enrolment was almost universal and was gender-balanced. Enrolment rates exceeded the average in the Middle East. Almost 6,000 students were enrolled in nine technical and vocational training centres providing market-oriented skills. The health programme, accounting for about one third of the Agency's budget, offered 9 million patients primary health care with a focus on maternal and child health and disease prevention and control, and had achieved nearly universal immunization coverage. The relief and social services programme provided an essential safety net for the poorest refugees and their dependents and vital support for particularly vulnerable groups, in the form of food, cash and other long-term assistance for families, and also home repair and support to vibrant independent community-based organizations. That programme had in the past year shifted its focus

towards those living in abject or absolute poverty. In those three areas, significant strides had been made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and the social and economic advancement of Palestine refugee women was one of the great unsung stories of the United Nations.

7. The fourth programme area, microfinance, introduced in 1991 in Gaza, had been expanded to the West Bank, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, stimulating local enterprise and generating income through 142,000 loans valued at $150 million. The overall rates of repayment had been high, but owing to the economic closure of the Gaza Strip, the programme's viability there was threatened. The Agency's fifth and newest department oversaw infrastructure and camp improvement projects, taking a participatory and community-driven approach to urban planning, shelter rehabilitation, environmental infrastructure and livelihood building, funded exclusively through extrabudgetary funds.

8. Concerned about the declining quality of some of its services and the inability to update some programme activities sufficiently, UNRWA was in the process of adopting a six-year medium-term strategy with effect from 2010, based solidly on field-level planning and results-based management practices, and requiring donor financing.

9. While contributions to UNRWA were no longer declining in real terms, the Agency's funding gap remained large. Rising food and energy costs in the past year had aggravated the problem. The findings in the report of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA (A/63/375) merited careful reading. It would be short-sighted and self-defeating to have to cut aid to the Palestine refugees.

10. It was heartening to report that the organizational development undertaken to overhaul the Agency's managerial and programme capacity and structure was already transforming the management, planning and delivery of services as well as the human resource and information technology systems that helped drive the process. The reforms were improving the ability to monitor and evaluate operations and their impact, and to plan strategically. And the results were already being felt in innovative programming and other aspects of the new management culture. Donors had thus far covered about 80 per cent of the budget for organizational development.

11. UNRWA had been following closely the revival of the peace process. Settlement of the refugee question — one of the key final-status issues — must be a part of the package. If agreement was reached, the Agency stood ready to play whatever role it was given by Member States in managing transitional arrangements and handing over its responsibilities to the appropriate authorities. The next year would mark the sixtieth anniversary of the Agency's establishment. While that was not, in itself, a cause for celebration given the persistence of the refugee problem for that long — the record of UNRWA achievements did deserve recognition.

12. **Mr. Jolle** (Norway), speaking as Rapporteur of the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), introduced the report of the Working Group (A/63/375), which noted the significant shortfall in pledges for UNRWA in light of unanticipated cost increases, and the serious effects that shortfall would have on services offered. The Working Group urged Governments to meet their responsibility and fully fund the Agency's budget for the biennium, given that the Agency played a vital role in preserving stability and security in the region. It also called on donors to fully fund the Emergency Appeal, since 70 per cent of registered refugees in the Gaza Strip were currently dependent on UNRWA for essential sustenance. Finally, it called on all donors, particularly countries in the region, to support the project for the rebuilding of the Nahr al-Barid refugee camp in northern Lebanon.

13. *Mr. Cujba (Moldova), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

14. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for Palestine) said that 2008 was the sixtieth anniversary of Al-Nakba, which had led to the uprooting, displacement and dispossession of the Palestinian people. More than 50 per cent of the population continued to live in exile or in refugee camps, while the remainder had been under Israeli occupation for more than 40 years, suffering severe oppression and constant violation of their human rights. The 4.6 million people currently registered with UNRWA still awaited realization of their inalienable right to return, as well as fair compensation for their suffering and loss of property, as did millions more in the diaspora. A peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine depended on a resolution of the refugee

question, as did peace and stability of the region as a whole. Despite United Nations efforts and the resumption of the peace process in Annapolis the previous November, the plight of the refugees had yet to be alleviated. Israel persisted with its rhetoric, intransigence, and violation of international law and United Nations resolutions. It continued to refuse to acknowledge all responsibility for the refugee problem, despite having undertaken to obliterate the history of the Palestinians and their connection to the land by destroying more than 400 villages. It implemented a "law of return" permitting the immigration into Israel of any person of Jewish descent, while at the same time preventing the return of the Palestinians, as called for in Security Council resolution 237 (1967).

15. Through the years of conflict and displacement, UNRWA had remained a constant in the lives of the refugees. With vital support from Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and other donors, the Agency had continued to provide essential assistance to Palestine refugees and displaced Palestinians, helping to improve their socio-economic situation. It provided education, health and emergency relief and social services, as well as hope of a better future and some semblance, at least, of human dignity. Her delegation welcomed the Commissioner-General's articulation of the Agency's vision in paragraph 3 of her report (A/63/13). Indeed, the importance of the Agency's mandate should not be underestimated. Its services had helped sustain the refugees, while contributing to regional stability as a whole. The Agency's work in all fields of cooperation remained necessary, pending a just and lasting solution of the question.

16. In the Gaza Strip, the majority of the population were refugees, half of whom were children. The situation there remained severe owing to the persistence in 2008 of Israel's punitive and inhumane siege, as well as military assaults against civilians. Border crossings continued to be closed, with only sporadic openings, while the movement of persons and goods — including food, medicine, fuel and other basic supplies — continued to restricted, and electricity supplies cut. The humanitarian impact on Palestinians had been devastating — 80 per cent of civilians in Gaza were dependent on food aid for survival. Disease was on the rise, and chronic malnutrition and anaemia were prevalent among children in particular. Over 90 per cent of work places remained closed, and nearly 50 per cent of the workforce were unemployed. Meanwhile, health and sanitation systems and other infrastructure were falling into disrepair, with spare parts and building materials in short supply. Such collective punishment against the civilian population had continued even after the ceasefire reached in June. In the West Bank, Israel's imposition of hundreds of checkpoints, its unlawful construction of settlements and of the Wall, its intensification of the permit regime and its discriminatory road network continued to obstruct access to the Agency's services. The deliberately imposed humanitarian crisis in both Gaza and the West Bank was being further exacerbated by the global financial crisis.

17. The closures were affecting the mobility of UNRWA vehicles and staff, who continued to be attacked and harassed by Israeli forces. In May, an elementary school teacher working for the Agency in Khan Younis, Gaza, had been decapitated by an Israeli explosive in front of her three young children, who had then been confined alone in a room for at least five hours by Israeli soldiers. Further, Israel's obstruction of UNRWA assistance to refugees, its endangerment of UNRWA staff and facilities and its levying of taxes and transit charges on the Agency were unacceptable.

18. In the Nahr al-Barid camp in Lebanon, UNRWA continued its efforts to assist Palestine refugees affected by hostilities. However, the project remained underfunded and the Agency required further support to assist more than 30,000 persons in need of emergency food and shelter.

19. Palestine reiterated its deepest gratitude to UNRWA, all United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations working together to assist the refugees. Her delegation urged the international community to continue its support for the Agency, particularly in light of increased financial pressures and needs, as well as its support for a just settlement of the question of Palestine in all its aspects.

20. *Mr. Argüello (Argentina) resumed the Chair.*

21. **Ms. Ziade** (Lebanon), speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, said that the report of the Commissioner-General reflected in statistics Israel's collective punishment of the Palestinian people. The economic blockade had destroyed Gaza's economy, rendered useless its health-care system and caused its infrastructure to collapse. In the West Bank, Israel had continued to expand its illegal separation wall in defiance of international law, crippling the economy,

paralysing livelihoods and diminishing prospects for a return to normal Palestinian life. Moreover, approximately 40 per cent of the West Bank was now taken up by settlements, outposts and military bases.

22. The Israeli military had forcibly entered UNRWA premises in the West Bank and Gaza in violation of Israel's obligations, under the 1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, to hold the premises of the United Nations inviolably. The Israeli authorities had also restricted, and continued to restrict, the movement of UNRWA personnel and had imposed cumbersome procedures for obtaining permits for local staff to enter Israel and East Jerusalem. To make matters worse, Israel, the occupying Power, had continued to impose a direct tax charge amounting to $132,524 and additional restrictions on Agency containers passing through Gaza crossings.

23. The Group condemned those Israeli practices and called on the community of nations to pressure Israel to allow UNRWA to carry out its mandate and to protect its staff members.

24. The plight of the Palestine refugees, which had lasted for more than 60 years, remained the principal question before the United Nations. It was incumbent on Members States to find a just and comprehensive solution to that question in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). The inalienable right of the Palestine refugees to return to their home could not be diminished by the passage of time or by any changes in the situation on the ground.

25. Pledging support for the Agency's continuing efforts to fulfil its mandate, she said that the Group was deeply concerned that the deficit of $98.8 million in the General Fund, combined with increased expenditures for 2008, would limit the Agency's ability to plan on the basis of refugee needs or to enhance the quality of its services. While a number of Arab States had increased their contributions to UNRWA, she called on all Member States to ensure its financial security. The Group also called on UNRWA to continue to coordinate with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), relevant Palestinian institutions and host Arab countries.

26. Recalling that 2008 marked the sixtieth anniversary of the Nakbah and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, she said that those events offered opportune moments to consider how international actors could do more to give meaning to human dignity for Palestine refugees and bring closer to realization the elusive goal of justice for Palestinians and a viable State of their own.

27. **Mr. Pires Pérez** (Cuba) said that for almost 60 years, UNRWA had been doing extraordinary work to alleviate the terrible living conditions of the Palestine refugees. The political, economic, social and humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, had been deteriorating tragically under Israel's brutal military occupation. The unilateral measures applied by Israel in the Territory were seriously threatening the prospects of achieving a negotiated two-State solution. Israel's incursions into Gaza and construction of the separation wall — a clear violation of international law — continued, as did the illegal settlement policy. The freedom of movement of persons and goods, especially in the Gaza Strip, had been severely restricted and had made prisoners of its inhabitants, despite repeated international appeals and successive United Nations resolutions. The level of poverty among Palestine refugees had risen by 30 per cent in the past year, and in the Gaza Strip 80 per cent of the inhabitants lived in extreme poverty. Extrajudicial executions, targeted assassinations, torture, arbitrary arrests, the destruction of homes, indiscriminate use of force, collective punishment and psychological terrorism were all features of Israel's presence in Palestine.

28. UNRWA was conducting its work under very difficult conditions. In violation of the Charter and of international treaties and agreements, the Israeli authorities were restricting the freedom of movement of the Agency's staff, goods and vehicles, undermining its work and causing it substantial financial loss; they were failing also to protect United Nations premises and the security of UNRWA staff.

29. The progress the Agency was making in its own organizational development was very encouraging. UNRWA should receive all the support and guarantees it needed.

30. Cuba would continue to support the struggle of the Palestinian people for its inalienable right to determine its own future and to establish an independent and sovereign State.

31. **Mr. Al-Bahi** (Sudan) said that Israeli practices in the Occupied Territory were increasing the suffering of the Palestinian people. Those practices also extended

to UNRWA staff members and restricted their ability to carry out their duties, in stark violation of international law. The events in the Nahr al-Barid refugee camp had further complicated the situation of the Palestine refugees, as had the Israeli aggression against Lebanon in 2006.

32. The suffering of the Palestinian people would not end until a just solution to the question of Palestine was found and the refugees were allowed to return to their homes in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). The right of return was inalienable and an integral part of their right to self-determination and to establish an independent State, with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital.

33. His delegation supported the three-year management reform programme, which UNRWA had embarked on in 2006, designed to transform and modernize the main institutional components of the Agency. It also commended the Agency's efforts to ensure that its local employees received hazard pay, just like other United Nations employees.

34. **Mr. Taleb** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, for the past 60 years, Israel had prevented the Palestine refugees from returning to their homes and it had brought in foreign settlers to occupy their lands, in blatant violation of international human rights law and United Nations resolutions. In his most recent report on the subject (A/63/326), the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967 declared that the continuous and deliberate violation by Israel of the Fourth Geneva Convention in its occupation of the Palestinian territory constituted an ongoing grave situation that called for a unified response by the international community.

35. The report also indicated that, thanks to the revival of the peace process at Annapolis and the existing truce, the situation for Israel has improved economically and politically, but the situation of the Palestinian people had worsened. The occupation authorities had expropriated more Palestinian land for the expansion of settlements, the crisis conditions had persisted in Gaza and restrictions on movement throughout the West Bank had been maintained or tightened. According to the Israeli non-governmental organization Peace Now, approximately 4,000 settler units had been built throughout the West Bank during the rule of former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, with one third of those settlements falling to the east of the illegal separation wall.

36. In respect of the situation in Gaza, the UNRWA report indicated that the territory remained in a state of isolation and perennial hardship. Severe fuel shortages resulting from the siege had paralysed public services, including sanitation and sewage treatment; that had had a direct bearing on public health. It should be noted that the Agency's Advisory Commission had reiterated the urgent need to remove restrictions relating to the movement of UNRWA staff and goods, in keeping with international law, the November 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access concluded between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority and the 1967 Comay-Michelmore agreement between UNRWA and the Government of Israel.

37. His delegation noted that the Agency's report had included some positive indications, including the assistance provided by his own country, which would continue to treat the Palestine refugees on an equal footing with its own citizens. Stressing that the Palestine refugee problem was an international political and moral responsibility, he said that UNRWA should continue to operate in accordance with its mandate until that mandate had been fulfilled. In addition, the Agency should strive to broaden its donor base.

38. The Agency's mandate under General Assembly resolution 302 (IV) should be reaffirmed and Member States should respond to the Commissioner-General's urgent appeals. His delegation regretted that local staff members of UNRWA were the only United Nations personnel in the region who did not receive hazard pay.

39. **Mr. Al-Shamisi** (United Arab Emirates) said that the report gave a clear picture of the ever-worsening condition of the Palestinian people living inside the Occupied Territory. The Israeli occupation authorities had continued to commit a wide range of human rights violations, including wanton use of force, extrajudicial killing and collective punishment. The people of the Gaza Strip had been suffering greatly as a result of the Israeli economic blockade, which had deprived them of the necessities of life, including food, medicines and electricity. The occupation authorities had even threatened UNRWA staff and facilities and had restricted its ability to perform its mandate.

40. His delegation strongly condemned all Israeli violations and called upon the community of nations

and the Quartet to fulfil their moral, legal, political and humanitarian responsibilities towards the Palestinian people and to compel Israel to desist from its practices.

41. Recalling his country's unconditional pledge to continue its financial support for the Agency's programmes and activities, he called upon the community of nations and specialized economic and financial institutions, such as the World Bank, to increase their level of support in order to help UNRWA overcome its budget deficit. He also called upon donor States to fulfil their pledges to finance the reconstruction of the Nahr al-Barid refugee camp, pointed out that charitable institutions from his country had already financed the construction of temporary schools and hospitals.

42. The occupying Power must end its aggressions against and blockades of Palestinian refugee camps and cease obstructing the Agency's work and the movement of its staff. The Agency should pursue its mandate in all regions without discrimination; its personnel should receive the same privileges and immunities as other United Nations staff members, particularly with regard to hazard pay.

43. **Mr. Allaf** (Jordan) said that the refugee issue was central to the question of Palestine and a key point for the final-status negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis. It was of particular concern to his country, for Jordan was host to nearly 1.8 million Palestine refugees — 42 per cent of all those registered with UNRWA — and to 600,000 persons who had been displaced as a result of the 1967 war. In addition, Jordan bore full responsibility for three of the 13 refugee camps it hosted.

44. Protecting the rights and interests of the Palestine refugees had directly impacted Jordan. Despite the country's difficult financial circumstances, the Government had expended nearly $600 million on educational, health and social services for the refugees during 2007. The inability of UNRWA to keep up with growing needs in the camps, owing to its financial constraints and to population growth, had resulted in still further obligations for the Government. Jordan therefore reserved the right to be compensated for the true cost of having acted as host country for more than five decades.

45. The role of UNRWA would remain pivotal until a final solution that was satisfactory to all parties was fully implemented. Until then, Jordan called upon the donor community to increase contributions to the Agency and to make a serious effort to find a long-term solution to its chronic budget deficits. It was imperative, moreover, that the needs of Palestine refugees be dealt with equally, irrespective of their geographical locations or their living conditions.

46. Jordan shared the concern of the Agency's Advisory Commission over the separation wall, closures, and other restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities in the West Bank and Gaza, which hampered access to employment, goods and basic services and restricted the ability of the Agency to transport staff and humanitarian assistance to those in need.

47. His delegation called upon the Agency to increase the budget of its Jordanian operations to a level commensurate with the needs of the refugees living in Jordan. The Agency should increase funding for hardship cases and redefine standards for determining such cases. Health centre staffing should be enhanced by the addition of specialist doctors and the problem of schools operating on a double-shift basis should be addressed by building more schools. UNRWA should also strive to close the gap between the level of basic services it provided and the level of service provided by the Jordanian State and to ensure that its services were available to refugees living outside the camps.

48. **Ms. Al-Sulaiti** (Qatar) said that, despite the untiring efforts of UNRWA, the condition of the Palestine refugees had deteriorated, particularly in the Occupied Territory. The severe decline in the Palestinian economy and the ever-increasing levels of unemployment and poverty, coupled with numerous other factors, had forced the Agency to make an emergency appeal for funds. However, it had received only 58 per cent of the amount it had requested. Her delegation therefore called upon all donors to provide the Agency with the funding it required to fulfil its mandate.

49. **Mr. Dizdar** (Turkey) said that his Government was heartened by the recent positive developments in the Middle East. The continuation of the bilateral contacts between Israel and the Palestinians, the relative calm on the borders of Israel, the movements on the Syrian-Israeli track and the agreement reached among the parties in Lebanon justified a certain amount of optimism, for the atmosphere in the region had improved over the previous year.

50. However, the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations must intensify, conditions on the ground in the West Bank must significantly improve and roadmap commitments, particularly on settlements, must be honoured. As long as just and lasting peace in the Middle East remained elusive, the suffering of the Palestine refugees, one of the most difficult aspects of the Middle East question, would not end. For 60 years the world had been witnessing their drama, in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and elsewhere, and had watched their ever-deteriorating living conditions and declining means of livelihood.

51. Turkey commended UNRWA and its staff for their untiring efforts under difficult and often dangerous circumstances. It welcomed the ongoing institutional and organizational reform process within UNRWA. Turkey felt privileged to chair the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA. The continued funding gap and its effects on UNRWA services was a crucial issue, for UNRWA was a lifeline for thousands of Palestine refugees; the better it was equipped the better the prospects of the refugees. The international community must give the Agency more resources. Turkey itself had not only increased its annual voluntary contribution, which included assistance for the Nahr al-Barid camp, but had also responded to the various emergency appeals. In addition, it had pledged $150 million for the Palestine reform and development plan and was already working with the authorities in Palestine on that project. Turkey continued sponsoring also the "Industry for Peace" project in the context of the tripartite Ankara Forum bringing together private-sector representatives from Turkey, Palestine and Israel, which would eventually create important employment opportunities for the Palestinians and serve both Israel and Palestine as a confidence-building factor.

52. Turkey would continue to be a firm supporter of every effort to ease the plight of the Palestine refugees and to bring permanent peace to the Middle East.

53. **Mr. Hoang Chi Trung** (Viet Nam) observed that UNRWA had made tremendous efforts to discharge its important mandate, working under dire conditions over the past six decades. It had tirelessly provided health and social services to the dispossessed Palestinian refugees, but it was most noteworthy that it had enabled hundreds of thousands of Palestinian children to attend school, thus improving their lives. Its emergency assistance had offered some help in the worsening situation in Gaza.

54. Viet Nam supported the ongoing reform of UNRWA, and welcomed its decision to devise a medium-term strategy based on assessment of actual needs. The greatest challenge to UNRWA was its uncertain financial position. The Agency was working under a large deficit at a time when demands for assistance had sharply increased. The United Nations and Member States must give it stronger support, and the other agencies within the United Nations family should cooperate closely with it.

55. Another major obstacle to its work was the lack of cooperation from the Israeli Government and, in particular, the latter's closure and curfew policies, restrictions of movement in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the construction of the separation wall, all of which had hampered the circulation of UNRWA staff, vehicles and goods. His delegation stressed that the privileges and immunities of all United Nations staff must be fully respected and called upon the Israeli authorities to abolish their restrictive policies.

56. After 60 years, more serious efforts had to be made to resolve the conflict in the Middle East, including the Palestine refugee problem, in a just and lasting way.

57. **Ms. Spoljaric** (Switzerland) hailed the commitment of UNRWA and its staff, who were working in a singularly restrictive and sometimes dangerous environment. The Agency's improved documentation on financial, strategic and programme planning should be accompanied, in the field and organizationally, by better programme monitoring and evaluation. The interim results of the Agency's management reform were encouraging.

58. She expressed particular concern at the steady deterioration of the social, economic and security situation prevailing throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In recent months UNRWA personnel's access to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, had been restricted, preventing them from responding adequately to the needs of the refugees. They were also forcing them to take administrative obstacles and security risks, all of which hampered their work. All parties concerned should respect their obligations and give UNRWA staff unimpeded access to the Palestine refugees.

59. Donor countries should contribute to the general budget of the Agency in addition to supporting specific projects. That applied also to the host countries, which had already shown generosity to their refugee Palestinian populations. Switzerland planned to continue being a reliable partner of UNRWA at all levels. It would be flexible in making additional specific contributions to projects that sought to improve living conditions, such as the reconstruction of the Nahr al-Barid camp in Lebanon.

60. Her Government would work with UNRWA as it prepared to mark the sixtieth anniversary of its establishment. The occasion would certainly not be a festive one, as it reflected on the United Nations inability to resolve the issue. However, it would be an opportunity for the international community to reaffirm its support for efforts to improve the Palestine refugees' living conditions and to recall the urgency of arriving at a just and lasting solution of the Israeli-Arab conflict.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.

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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 30 October 2008, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Argüello ..... (Argentina)
later: Mr. Elsherbini (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Egypt)

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08-57717 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 29: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (*continued*) (A/63/13, A/63/269, A/63/315, A/63/317 and A/63/375

1. **Ms. Raz-Schechter** (Israel) said that Israel would continue to facilitate the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) while meeting its own legitimate security concerns. However, it believed that the Commissioner-General's report continued a tradition of one-sidedness and lack of balance. Its tone and selective use of facts suggested that the responsibility for the precarious situation of the Palestinians rested exclusively with Israel.

2. In fact, Israel remained committed to finding a solution to the Palestine refugee problem in the framework of a comprehensive peace settlement. Significant efforts were being made under the Annapolis process, to reach a just and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Israel had removed 111 roadblocks and 4 checkpoints in the West Bank, created a pilot project to reinforce the Palestinian police and promote economic development, was working to promote Palestinian industrial parks and had constructed several power plants as a joint project between Israel and the Palestinians. Those efforts had been accompanied by significant increases in tourism and in the movement of goods in the West Bank, and also in the number of permits allowing Palestinians to work in Israel.

3. Despite the progress in the West Bank, however, the violent rise of Hamas in the Gaza Strip had resulted in a serious deterioration of the situation on the ground on both sides of the border. Gaza had regressed and become a major threat to Israeli cities and towns, which were under constant attack from Hamas rocket and mortar fire. The report should have drawn a connection between Israel's ability to ease security restrictions and the level of such terrorist attacks. Israel had facilitated the entrance of large quantities of food, fuel and other materials into the Gaza Strip during the period of relative calm that had begun in June 2008, but Hamas continued to rearm itself and openly threaten Israeli civilians and soldiers. Again, the report should have established a relationship between Israel's ability to provide assistance and the overall security situation; instead, it gave the impression that Israel's actions took place in a vacuum.

4. Israel maintained its position with respect to its support of the Agency's mandate, but insisted that UNRWA and any resolution referring to its activities should avoid involvement with political issues and should also consider Israel's security concerns in the light of the constant threats. She also called on UNRWA to improve its screening methods to ensure that its staff were not involved in terrorist activities or unauthorized political activity.

5. While some Arab countries were genuinely interested in the welfare of Palestine refugees, many continued to take a cynical approach. Most had failed to help mediate a solution to the human tragedy resulting from the destruction of the Nahr al-Barid refugee camp in Lebanon. The great majority of funds to rebuild the camp had come from Western countries. Similarly, only five Arab countries had contributed funding to UNRWA from 2000 to 2007; those contributions represented only about 10 per cent of the Agency's overall budget for the period.

6. Israel was a democratic State that was struggling to maintain a balance between the rights and freedoms of its own citizens and those of persons who had chosen to use a civilian population as shields. While not desiring to harm or restrict Palestinians in any way, Israel could not afford to refrain from taking action when the lives of its own citizens were continuously threatened. Despite the repeated attacks against Israelis as they provided humanitarian aid to Gaza, Israel would continue to offer its assistance to UNRWA and the Palestinians. Israel sincerely hoped that there would be substantial changes in the will of the Palestinian leadership to find common ground towards peace, and it looked forward to the achievement of a comprehensive peace with the Palestinians and the establishment of a viable Palestinian State living in peace and security side by side with Israel.

7. **Mr. Kassianides** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania and Montenegro; and, in addition, Armenia, Liechtenstein, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the European Union fully supported UNRWA and its staff, and also appreciated the consistent efforts of the Jordanian, Syrian and Lebanese authorities to

provide assistance to Palestine refugees over the past half century. In the context of the need for adapting the Agency's operational processes, the European Union supported the organizational development process initiated in 2006.

8. The European Union remained very concerned about the economic and humanitarian situation of the refugees, especially of children, for whom special protection and full observance of their rights were essential. The situation in the Gaza Strip was critical, and required constant humanitarian assistance and continuity of basic services. Moreover, with regard to the provision of basic services in the context of movement restrictions, strict adherence to international humanitarian law was vital. The European Union supported the reopening of the crossings to and from the Gaza Strip, not only to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian services, but also to boost economic development through the resumption of trade. While firmly condemning the unacceptable attacks on Israeli territory and acknowledging Israel's right to self-defence, the European Union urged all parties, including Israel, not to deny the citizens of Gaza their basic needs, and to guarantee free and secure access to humanitarian goods and personnel.

9. The chronic fiscal deficit affecting the UNRWA general budget was cause for concern, as it threatened to reduce the levels of security and aid provided by the Agency. The European Union supported efforts to increase the number of donors, particularly in the region, as well as the initiatives described in the resource mobilization strategy. It also reaffirmed its own commitment to maintain its humanitarian and economic assistance to the Palestinian people through the PEGASE financing mechanism .

10. Finally, the European Union saluted the work undertaken by UNRWA to rebuild the Nahr al-Barid refugee camp in Lebanon, and invited all donor countries and countries in the region to honour their commitments to rebuild the camp.

11. **Mr. Jølle** (Norway) commended the Agency and its staff for their untiring efforts to assist Palestine refugees, and urged all donors, including regional countries, to contribute to the Agency's emergency and general activities. Norway was by providing US$ 2 million for reconstruction and humanitarian assistance to the Nahr al-Barid refugee camp.

12. The social and economic situation in the Gaza Strip was worrying, with the cost of food aid rising because of Israeli import restrictions. While conditions there had improved slightly during the past summer, the amount of commercial and humanitarian goods allowed into the Gaza Strip was still insufficient to meet humanitarian needs or the basic requirements for a viable private sector. Norway called on Israel to ease its restrictions on the movement of goods and people, and to refrain from administering punitive measures on the entire population of the Gaza Strip.

13. **Ms. Halpern** (United States of America) said that her Government shared the international community's concerns about the difficult situation facing the Palestinian people. It had provided almost $600 million in humanitarian and development assistance to Palestinians in fiscal year 2008, over one fourth of which had gone to core services and emergency relief provided by UNRWA.

14. The Agency suffered from regular financial shortfalls that inhibited its ability to provide basic health and education services needed by its beneficiaries. Particularly urgent was the funding gap UNRWA faced in its effort to assist the 30,000 Palestine refugees displaced from Nahr al-Barid refugee camp in Northern Lebanon. Should the shortfall continue, it could force the Agency to reduce emergency assistance and delay reconstruction of the camp; that, in turn, could increase instability in Lebanon and adversely affect regional security. Her delegation therefore called upon Member States, particularly countries in the region, to increase their contribution to the core budget and emergency appeals of UNRWA. It also looked to the Agency to continue its efforts to strengthen fiscal oversight and management capacity through its organizational development plan.

15. **Mr. Al-Yaqubi** (Oman) said that the question of the Palestine refugees was the oldest and most important issue on the agenda of the United Nations. For over 60 years, those refugees had suffered in camps scattered throughout the Near East. The recent restrictions placed by Israel on the movement of UNRWA staff had further exacerbated their situation. While the number of refugees officially registered with the Agency was nearly 4.5 million, that figure did not accurately reflect the total population because not all of the refugees were registered. Nonetheless, all of the Palestine refugees, including the unregistered, had the

right to return and live freely and peacefully in their land.

16. His delegation called on the community of nations to pressure Israel to cease its hostile actions against Palestinian civilians and to not impede the work of UNRWA. Member States should use all available means to help the Agency fulfil its mandate until all of the Palestine refugees had returned to their land.

17. **Mr. Al-Mekrad** (Kuwait) said that the question of the Palestine refugees was an international responsibility. Accordingly, UNRWA must continue its operations until the question of those refugees had been resolved in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

18. While realizing that financial difficulties were hindering the Agency in its work, his delegation would like to see UNRWA increase its services. Moreover, it should carry out its mandate in the five operational areas (the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Jordan) without discrimination.

19. Kuwait had provided, and continued to provide, financial and material assistance to the Palestine refugees and it had contributed to the financing of numerous infrastructure projects. It would continue to support UNRWA by honouring its commitment to contribute $1.5 million to the Agency's budget. He stressed that the Agency's local staff members should enjoy the same privileges as other United Nations employees working in the region.

20. Finally, expressing his delegation's full support for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, he demanded that the Israeli Government respect the principle of land for peace, which was the foundation of the peace process, and comply with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

21. **Mr. Badji** (Senegal) said that the programmes and services UNRWA provided to the Palestine refugees served to lighten the suffering caused by the illegal activities undertaken by Israel in defiance of the relevant international instruments. Israel's actions were unacceptable and interfered with UNRWA's work. His delegation therefore urged that UNRWA be allowed to continue providing its services without interference until a just and lasting solution to the question of the Palestine refugees had been found.

22. Noting that the Agency's work was also threatened because of inadequate funding, he urgently appealed to all donors to ensure that the Agency's programmes were provided with dependable financial support. His delegation welcomed the administrative reforms being carried out by the Agency despite the difficult operational and economic conditions it faced. As the sixtieth anniversary of the Agency approached, it was incumbent on the entire international community to reflect on what more could be done to hasten the arrival of a viable, independent and sovereign State for the Palestinian people.

23. **Mr. Elsherbini** (Egypt) said that Israel bore full responsibility for the plight of the Palestine refugees. It continued to deprive the Palestinian people of their rights and to deny its legal and moral responsibilities for their suffering. As noted in numerous reports, including the most recent report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, the humanitarian situation in the West Bank and Gaza had deteriorated as a result of the practices of the Israeli occupation authorities. The restrictions imposed by those authorities on the movement of UNRWA staff not only placed additional burdens on the Agency but violated the 1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations and the 1967 Comay-Michelmore Agreement.

24. The Israeli closure policy further exacerbated the situation by depriving the West Bank refugees of the ability to work, attend educational institutions and maintain family ties. Meanwhile, Gazans were being deprived of food, fuel and humanitarian relief supplies. All of that had increased Palestinian frustrations and affected ongoing efforts aimed at achieving peace and security and the creation of a viable, independent Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza. There was now little hope of reaching agreement on final-status issues by the end of 2008, as had been agreed at Annapolis.

25. His delegation denounced the continued construction of the illegal separation wall and called on Israel to dismantle the portions already built, in compliance with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the matter. The continued building of settlements in the West Bank and Gaza was a grave violation of international law, United Nations resolutions and Israel's commitments under the Road Map.

26. His delegation therefore called upon the donor community to continue its financial support for the Agency and to respond to the latter's emergency appeals for funding. It also supported the Agency's request to increase the number of international staff in order to ensure the successful implementation of structural and administrative reforms designed to increase its efficiency.

27. **Mr. Shukla** (India) said that the severe challenges UNRWA continued to face, as described in the report of the Commissioner-General, directly affected the well-being of Palestinian refugees and the Agency's ability to discharge its humanitarian responsibilities. Such failure might undermine the security and stability of an already volatile region.

28. The Agency's budgetary shortfall continued to grow, as did the demand for its services, particularly in the Gaza Strip. Furthermore, the destruction of the Nahr al-Barid refugee camp in Lebanon had compounded the Agency's problems. Greater international efforts were urgently needed to ease UNRWA's fiscal burden.

29. Restrictions on movement and the blockade of Gaza were having serious consequences in an already precarious humanitarian situation, and restrictions on fuel and electricity supply in Gaza were further compounding the difficulties. Moreover, the ongoing intra-Palestinian conflict had intensified the problem of access, forcing several refugee communities to seek assistance after decades of self-reliance.

30. The insecurity bred by extreme poverty among Palestinians in the Occupied Territories was heightened by the lack of definitive progress in the peace process, contrary to the expectations of the international community since the Annapolis summit. The frustration resulting on the ground from further delays in the peace process was increasing the volatility of the situation, particularly in the context of continued construction of the separation wall and expansion of Israeli settlements, in contravention of the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Road Map.

31. In order to bring about a lasting solution to the Palestine refugee question, the parties to the conflict and the international community must redouble their efforts to resolve the long-standing conflict. His Government endorsed all efforts to support UNRWA by expanding its capacity to render assistance.

32. *Mr. Elsherbini (Egypt), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

33. **Mr. Tsuruga** (Japan) said that his country regarded the Palestine refugee problem as the core issue of the peace process and had provided over $500 million in aid for Palestine refugees over the previous half century as part of its policy of "human security", which focused on ensuring that people were empowered to live in dignity.

34. Expressing deep concern at the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, particularly the Gaza Strip, he urged the international community to continue supporting the Palestinian people. His Government had, through UNRWA, provided several million dollars for emergency medical supplies, food aid and temporary accommodation for refugees displaced by fighting in northern Lebanon, as well as to those in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Jordan and Syria. He expressed appreciation for the organizational development being carried out under the leadership of the Commissioner-General, which would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Agency. His country remained committed to supporting UNRWA, and hoped that the international community would do the same.

35. **Ms. Khan** (Bangladesh) noted that the international community's repeated appeals to Israel to improve the deteriorating conditions of the Palestinians had gone unheeded. Her delegation remained deeply concerned about the dire humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Lebanon, where intensive Israeli military operations and settlement activities had caused widespread displacement of the innocent civilian population. Bangladesh strongly condemned illegal Israeli encroachment on Palestinian lands.

36. Greater restrictions on the freedom of movement of UNRWA personnel and vehicles in the Occupied Palestinian Territories were severely hampering the Agency's humanitarian activities. In addition, Israeli sanctions had led to a further decline in the socio-economic conditions of the Palestinian people, as evinced, inter alia, by the dramatic rise in unemployment in recent years. Her delegation urged Israel to remove all restrictions and taxes imposed on the Palestinians' economic activities, and called for unrestricted mobility for and non-interference in UNRWA operations.

37. She welcomed the success of the Agency's microcredit programme, and called for it to be extended to include poverty-stricken Palestinian women. Given its role as a pioneer of microcredit, Bangladesh would be happy to help fine-tune the programme in order to meet the specific needs of the Palestinian people and the region as a whole.

38. Finally, she appealed to the international community to contribute generously to UNRWA so that it was not forced to cut back on its services to Palestine refugees and, in particular, so that it could provide rehabilitation and emergency assistance to the refugees in the Nahr al Barid camp in northern Lebanon.

39. **Mr. Al-Zayani** (Bahrain) said that the report had shed light on the deteriorating conditions inside the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Poverty and unemployment had risen and there had been rampant human rights violations. The separation wall and its associated regime had continued to expand, notwithstanding the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. Although the wall had yet to be completed, it had already had a devastating impact on Palestinian agriculture and had contributed to population displacement throughout the West Bank.

40. The report of the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/63/375) indicated that, as in previous years, the Agency had a large funding gap in its budget and that cash flow problems had adversely impacted its financial position. In that connection, his delegation commended the Agency for the innovative methods it had used to minimize the effect of the budget gap on its core programmes and expressed the hope that donors would come up with additional contributions so that UNRWA could overcome its financial crisis and expand its programmes in proportion to the growth in the refugee population.

41. **Mr. Natalegawa** (Indonesia) said that the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories continued to be marked by high levels of unemployment, poverty and economic decline, as well as extensive violations of Palestinian rights. The report of the Commissioner-General confirmed the extent of the impact of the wall on the Palestinian economy. Moreover, the incursions led by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) and the closure of border crossings continued to cause the Palestinian people great suffering. It was deplorable that approximately 40 per cent of the West Bank was now taken up by settlements, outposts, military bases and other areas.

42. Expressing grave concern at the situation endured by Palestinians, particularly in the Gaza Strip, he stressed that the truce must result in further relief for the civilian population including the regular opening of the crossings for both humanitarian and commercial flows. He also hoped that stalled United Nations and other donor projects would immediately resume. Finally, he commended the Agency for its steadfast dedication to alleviating Palestinian suffering under the current circumstances.

43. **Ms. Koning AbuZayd** (Commissioner-General, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) said that the financial difficulties with which the Agency was struggling were both immediate and medium-term. While Member States were right to focus on the current situation in the Nahr al-Barid camp, the problems caused by the global financial crisis must not be overlooked, given their potentially serious consequences.

44. Concern had also been expressed at the problems of movement of people and goods in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; in that connection, she called for a rededication to the implementation of the 2005 Access and Movement Agreement, to which all parties, especially Israel and the Palestinian Authorities, had agreed.

45. The ministerial level event to be held in commemoration of the Agency's 60th anniversary the following year would provide an opportunity for sober reflection on what had been achieved by the refugees and UNRWA, as well as what remained to be done.

46. Lastly, she expressed appreciation for the overwhelming support extended to UNRWA and its staff by the donor countries, the host authorities and the Committee.

47. **Mr. Hosseini** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking in exercise of the right to reply, said that unsubstantiated allegations had been made about his country by the representative of a regime based on violence, occupation, State terrorism and bloodshed. The Zionist regime had lacked legitimacy since its inception, and its leaders had been guilty of crimes against humanity as well as war crimes. It is not surprising, therefore, that its representative should utter

such propaganda. His delegation rejected the fabrications and distortions, which were aimed at diverting attention from the atrocities committed in Palestine and elsewhere in the region. The regime itself posed the most serious threat to the world and should be urgently countered by the international community.

48. **Mr. Taleb** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the statement of the representative of Israel had been an attempt to mask the ugly face of the Israeli occupation of Arab lands. The so-called "democratic State" of which she had spoken was holding nearly 11,000 Palestinians, including the legitimately elected members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, in its prisons. It was also the same place where the Arab residents of Acre had been attacked by mobs for nearly three weeks simply because one of them had operated an automobile on Yom Kippur.

49. The representative of Israel had alleged that the suffering of the Palestinians in Gaza had started when Hamas took control of that territory. All the facts clearly indicated that the suffering of the Palestinians in both Gaza and the West Bank was caused by the Israeli occupation. Practically speaking, Israel continued to occupy Gaza, given that it controlled the territory's six crossing points; it was, therefore, legally liable for the humanitarian and economic conditions therein. She had also claimed that Hamas had committed aggressions against Israel; in fact, Hamas had been founded in response to Israeli occupation.

50. The legitimacy of Israel's existence was based on General Assembly resolution 181 (II). However, implementation of that resolution also called for implementation of resolution 194 (III) regarding the return of the Palestine refugees. Thus until that resolution was implemented, the Agency would not have fulfilled its historic responsibility towards the Palestinian people.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.